

# IN THESE TIMES

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**Elijah's nation**

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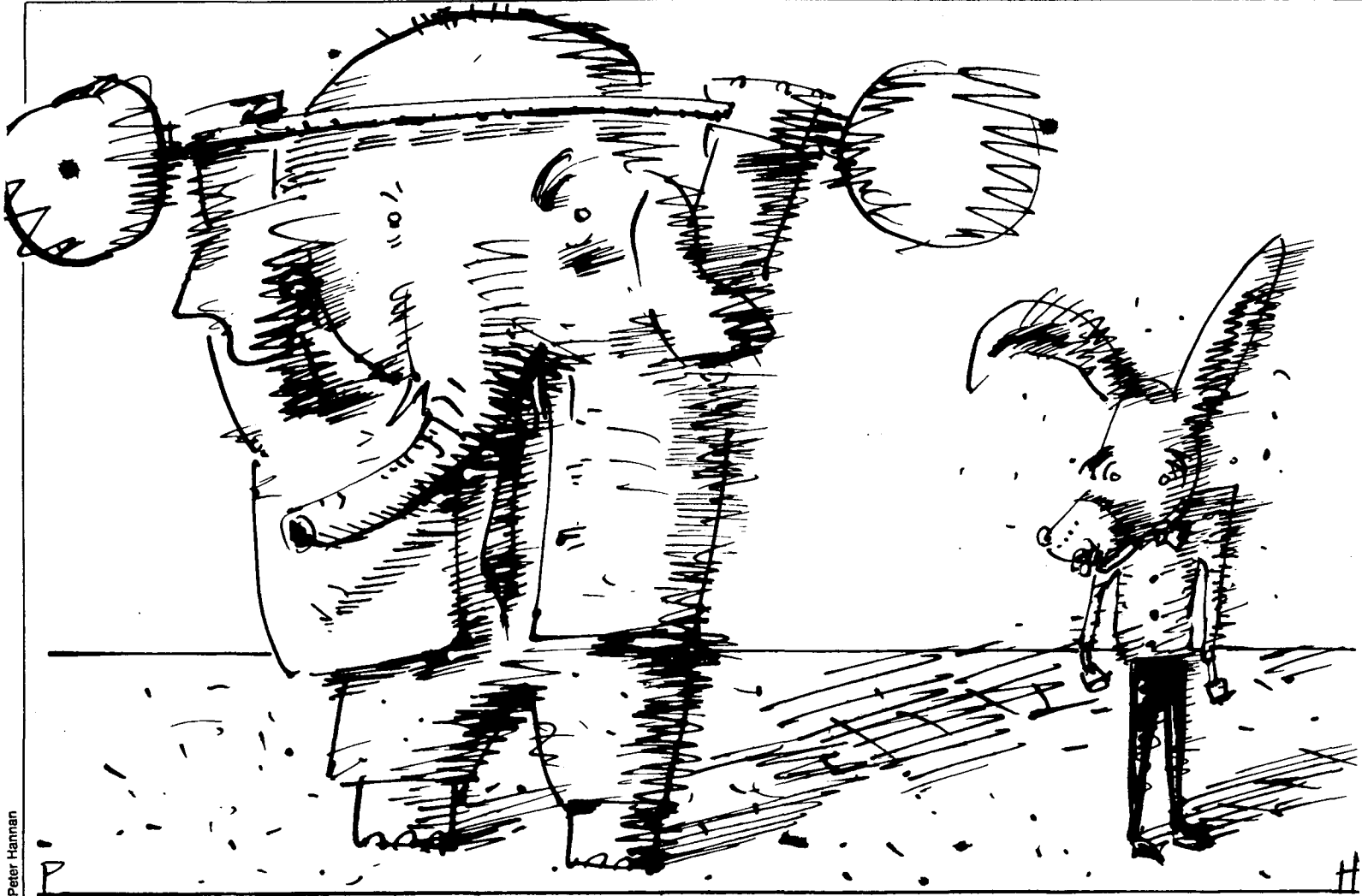
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Peter Hannan

# Republicans surge while Dems drift

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

Two events foreseen for Ronald Reagan's second term, the reduction of his influence over Congress and his party's loss in influence over Congress and the populace, have not really come to pass. Judged from the events of the last weeks, Reagan has suffered only a slight decline from the magic of his first term; and the Republican Party, far from suffering from the disabilities of its lameduck standard bearer, has shown increasing signs of becoming the governing party in the U.S. Reagan suffered two defeats in Congress recently. Last month the House of Representatives defeated by two votes an administration proposal to fund the Nicaraguan *contras*. And on May 10, the Senate approved a compromise budget for fiscal year 1986 that rejected administration proposals to increase military spending 6 percent after inflation and to knock out a range of domestic programs, including AMTRAK, the national passenger railway. Instead, the Republican-led Senate passed a resolution maintaining military spending at its present

Robert Byrd and the other by his chief rival Florida Senator Lawton Chiles. By endorsing a reduction in Social Security, Chiles' proposal minimized the political capital that the Democrats will be able to reap from the final Senate bill. And Byrd's bill called for a higher level of military spending than the final bill passed by the Republican majority. So much for the Democratic alternatives.

Republican successes in Congress have been mirrored in the country at large. There have been several significant signs of an ongoing realignment away from the Democrats and toward the Republicans. As the 1985 and 1986 elections approach, prominent Democrats have shown reluctance to challenge incumbents or even to vie for open seats. In Arizona, Democratic Gov. Bruce Babbitt has declined to run for the seat Sen. Barry Goldwater is giving up in 1986. In New Jersey, Rep. James Florio, who barely lost to Gov. Thomas Kean in 1981, has ruled out a challenge to Kean this year, leaving the November race virtually uncontested.

As the Republican budget now heads for the Democratic-controlled House, House Democrats appear to be in similar disarray. The Black Caucus, traditionally the seat of militant opposition to spending cuts, has been compromised by Rep. William Gray (D-PA) becoming the Budget Committee head. Gray has played the role largely of a mediator among the feuding Southern and Northern, urban and rural, and liberal and conservative factions. And the Republican budget has put him in the very difficult position of having to match the \$56 billion in projected deficit reduction in the Senate's plan without tampering with Social Security or tax increases.

Republicans have also gained or appear about to gain some important converts. In Texas, Rep. Kent Hance, an unsuccessful senatorial primary candidate in 1984, has announced that he is changing parties and is expected to challenge Democratic Gov. Mark White in 1986. In Detroit, a black county official William Lucas has announced that he is becoming a Republican and is expected to challenge Democratic Gov. James Blanchard next year. In Massachusetts, former Gov. Edward King and two other prominent Democrats are expected to change parties and run for office in 1986 as Republicans.

Throughout the Sunbelt, state legislators have been crossing or have been proposing to cross the aisle. In Louisiana, seven Democratic legislators have recently become Republicans; in Alabama, Gov. George Wallace is even rumored to be considering a re-election bid as a Republican.

In the Sunbelt states, the Republicans have also scored impressive gains in voter registration. For instance, in Florida, the Republicans have increased their registration during the last four years by 465,292, while the Democrats have increased theirs only 225,646.

Of course, the Republicans could still suffer a reverse in the 1986 elections. The administration's attempt to pare farm aid has weakened the party somewhat in the Midwestern prairie states. And the Republicans may still have to pay for their support of Social Security cuts in the current budget proposal. But unless there is a sharp economic downturn, the reverses expected in 1986 now look far less likely to occur. The Republicans increasingly have the look of a governing and majority party and the Democrats of a discomfited opposition. ■

## ITT's West Coast bureau

Two months after the fact, we're proud to announce that *In These Times* now has a West Coast bureau. And we're even prouder to announce that Joan Walsh has moved from Chicago to Oakland to assume that post.

Before coming to *In These Times* more than two years ago, Joan was editor and then staff writer for the Santa Barbara News and Review. She has a wide range of friends up and down the state of California and is knowledgeable about its politics. We are confident that with Joan covering West Coast developments regularly, our coverage of that area will be greatly improved.

Those wishing to contact her with story ideas can reach her in Oakland at (415) 531-7182. ■



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## IN THESE TIMES



Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega (above) and President Ronald Reagan



# Nicaraguans predict impact of embargo

By William Gasperini

MANAGUA

**T**HE OFFICIAL SANDINISTA NEWS-paper *Barricada* responded to the beginning of the U.S. trade embargo against Nicaragua with a banner headline: "*Que se rinda tu madre!*" Loosely translated, it means "up yours." The phrase, which Nicaraguans use in moments of anger, dates from now legendary Sandinista poet Leonel Rugama, who defied Somoza national guardsmen demanding his surrender in a 1969 battle.

Although Rugama died in that encounter, the phrase has come to symbolize Nicaraguan defiance of Washington's demands, banking on moral firmness to face the situation. Given the difficult state of the economy and the ongoing counter-revolutionary war, Nicaraguans will need all the moral force they can muster to overcome what Defense Minister Humberto Ortega calls "a new earthquake rocking our nation."

Vice-President Sergio Ramirez said in a recent speech, "They are not doing this because we represent a security threat; rather, the blockade comes because Nicaragua has become a model for independence and change that they cannot accept." Ramirez spoke on May 4, the "day of national dignity," when in 1927 national hero Augusto Sandino told U.S. Marines occupying the country that he would not lay down his arms as demanded.

"The sanctions are no more than arbitrary demands on a sovereign country through force and coercion," Ramirez continued. "[They] attempt to dictate norms on how we handle our internal political situation; to regulate our international relations based on their interest. We will never tolerate interference in our affairs or accept a cowardly peace," he said, echoing Sandino's words.

Historical symbolism aside, few are denying that the trade embargo will have a powerful impact. But the economic damage will be mitigated by Nicaragua's post-revolution policy of diversifying trade mar-

kets. Only 16 percent of Nicaragua's exports went to the U.S. in 1984, compared with 34 percent in 1978. And last year the country imported \$110 million in goods from the U.S., as opposed to \$247 million in 1980.

But the impact will be more severe in certain sectors of the economy, particularly in exports of meats and bananas, which have gone almost entirely to the U.S. The day the embargo took effect a boat laden with 70 crates of bananas left for Belgium, the first effort at finding alternative markets. Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock used the occasion to explain that such markets for U.S.-bound goods will be found. The problem is that prices in other markets are often lower and extra transport costs—especially in the case of perishables like bananas and meat—will lower earnings.

More significant will be longer-term costs for imports of spare parts, medical equipment and specialized products, most of which come from North American firms. Nicaragua will be able to obtain some goods from U.S. subsidiaries in third countries such as Panama or Costa Rica. Yet subsidiaries often have only modern parts, which are often not compatible with Nicaragua's often obsolete machinery.

In any case, costs will be higher, particularly if the blockade forces Nicaragua to phase-in new technology from the socialist bloc. And the transition time will be crucial in an economy that just barely manages to keep production on a par with demand.

## Oil shortage.

Nicaragua's sole oil refinery is managed by Exxon under contract with the state oil company Petronic. The refinery needs \$1.5 million in spare parts each year to keep its aging machinery in operation, according to Petronic Director Otto Schaeffer. Schaeffer said alternate sources for the parts are being sought, and he spoke of problems in obtaining crucial heavy-grade oil used in agricultural and heavy machinery.

"We must import these oils, and without them the economy could be perilized," he told *In These Times*. The refinery manages

to produce 70-80 percent of the gasoline and diesel fuel used in Nicaragua; the rest is imported. Changes in equipment and delayed delivery of crude oil in February resulted in long lines at gas stations and a lack of basic motor oil—an indication of the vulnerable gap between supply and demand on which the economy rests. The state energy firm INE also said it had planned to replace old equipment in the country's electric power system. But the embargo will make it very difficult for INE to carry out that plan.

The health sector is also vulnerable, as 70 percent of Nicaragua's health equipment comes from the U.S. Doctors at several Managua hospitals expressed concern over supplies of surgical equipment, oxygen

tents, machines for blood transfusions and even anesthetics. However, a change in the document specifying the terms of the embargo states that "commercial medical equipment" is exempt. Thus the effects on health care are still unclear.

Although only 10 percent of Nicaragua's medicines come from the U.S., the embargo will close 89 private importers who supply 400 pharmacies in the country. Seventy percent of insecticides are also American-made, which will affect an ongoing campaign against "*aedes aegypti*" mosquitoes, carriers of dengue fever. Under the terms of the embargo only donations of food, clothing or medicine "used to relieve human suffering" may travel to Nicaragua from the U.S.

Ironically, the embargo will likely affect the private sector more than state-run enterprises, something private producers are all too aware of. While the state sector has sought to gradually lessen the dependence on U.S. technology, private firms have not done so. Rather than create further obstacles for the Sandinistas, as intended, the embargo may instead foster unity inside the country.

"The embargo will have a grave impact, but not as much as it would have two years ago," said Rosendo Diaz, general secretary of UPANIC, an organization belonging to the opposition business group COSEP. "I think this may unify people rather than divide us." Diaz predicted that alternate sources of crucial goods will be found and the process of "cannibalizing" (reusing parts from used or damaged vehicles) will continue to provide needed inputs.

Yet others in the opposition disagreed with Diaz' assessment and blamed the Sandinistas for the intransigence that brought on the embargo.

"This is a critical moment for the FSLN [Sandinista Front]," said Carlos Humbes of the opposition trade union UTN. "They must seek immediate reconciliation with the U.S. The weight of this will fall, of course, on the workers, not on members of

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**Only 16 percent of Nicaragua's exports went to the U.S. in 1984, compared to 34 percent in 1978. And last year the country imported \$110 million in goods from the U.S. as opposed to \$247 million in 1980.**



# INSHORT

Beth Maschinot

## Harvard lends an ear

The divestment campaign at Harvard University took a new twist last week as students charged that their telephones had been tapped in an attempt to pre-empt their anti-apartheid protest. Junior Anthony Ball and sophomore John Ross, both members of the undergraduate Southern Africa Solidarity Committee (SASC), claimed last week that university officials found out about a planned takeover of a university building by using information obtained from a phone conversation that took place between the two students.

SASC member Damon Silver recounted that on the night of May 2, Ross and Ball jokingly suggested occupying the main administration building on campus. Within hours, Silver was asked by an administration official whether in fact SASC had such plans. When Silver contacted Ball and Ross, they realized something was askew and decided to set up Harvard officials. On Friday, May 3, Ball and Ross discussed on their phone their plans to "break into the offices of Harvard magazine, disable a burglar alarm and use plastic explosives to get at CCSR [Corporate Committee on Social Responsibility] files and destroy them," according to Silver. The supposed takeover was to take place at midnight that Friday. At around 10:30 that night, Harvard University police surrounded the office building, blocked all entrances, placed a photographer inside the building and had the burglar alarm company standing outside the offices.

SASC members have stopped short of directly charging that university officials have tapped their phone. But they are demanding that the university investigate the charges and are threatening legal action to find out how the contents of their conversation reached the police. Harvard University Police Chief Paul Johnson responded to the uproar by saying, "We feel it's a frivolous complaint that the students are making. [An illegal wiretap] has never happened and will never happen." Johnson claims that the police were tipped off by an "anonymous caller."

The actions against SASC take place at the end of a confrontational spring between campus divestment groups and the university. SASC has taken the lead in demanding that Harvard divest the \$580 million of stocks that it owns in companies doing business in South Africa. Actions which have taken place at Harvard this spring include an April divestment rally, attended by more than 5,000 people and addressed by a member of the African National Congress (ANC) and Jesse Jackson, an eight-hour takeover of a university building and, most recently, a student blockade of a university building in which the South African consul general from New York was attending a reception in his honor held by the Harvard Conservative Club. Two students were injured in a melee with police that followed the latter action. Currently, a group of Harvard alumni are organizing demonstrations for the upcoming commencement exercises in June, urging Harvard to divest.

Harvard has responded to student pressure by resurrecting a disciplinary committee which was formed in the late '60s to investigate and punish leading student activists. The university said they plan to reactivate the committee in order to discipline students that were involved in the eight-hour building takeover in late April.

## On the attack

A group of 80 church and refugee groups across the country filed suit in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco May 7 to halt the U.S. government's deportation of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and the prosecution of sanctuary workers. The suit asserts that Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees qualify for political asylum under the terms of the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 and Protocol II of the Geneva Convention of 1949. Both the law and the treaty uphold a principle that prohibits the forcible return of refugees to countries they have fled because of war or persecution. The complaint, filed by attorneys of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) and the Center for Constitutional Rights, is supported by extensive documentation of human rights violations in El Salvador and Guatemala gathered by the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International and Americas Watch. The suit also contends that the act of offering sanctuary is a religious

practice consistent with U.S. refugee law, making prosecution of sanctuary workers a violation of constitutionally-protected religious freedom.

Two chief U.S. officials for refugee law enforcement, Attorney General Edwin C. Meese III and Alan Nelson, commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, are named as defendants in the suit.

Marc Van Der Hout, plaintiffs' attorney and president of the NLG, said that the Reagan administration refuses to accept Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees' legitimate claims to asylum because it would have to admit that the governments of those countries are "systematically murdering and brutalizing their populations" with U.S. military aid. Charging that "it is foreign policy considerations that dictate which refugees are going to be granted asylum and which are not," Van Der Hout cite INS figures showing that in 1984 the U.S. denied 13,000 out of 13,373 Salvadoran refugees' asylum claims, for an approval rate of 2.45 percent. The approval rate for Guatemalans was even more dismal at 0.39 percent. These figures contrast with an approval rate of 30 percent for all nationalities, with even higher rates for Russians (40 percent) and Iranians (60 percent).

"The right of refugee status is a non-political right; it's a humanitarian right," insisted attorney Morton Stavis, stressing that the issue at stake is not immigration, but "simply the right of temporary refugee status." Refugees from Poland, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Uganda are all presently accorded "extended voluntary departure status," allowing them to remain in the U.S. until conditions are safe for return to their own countries, but Salvadorans and Guatemalans are denied this right, according to Stavis.

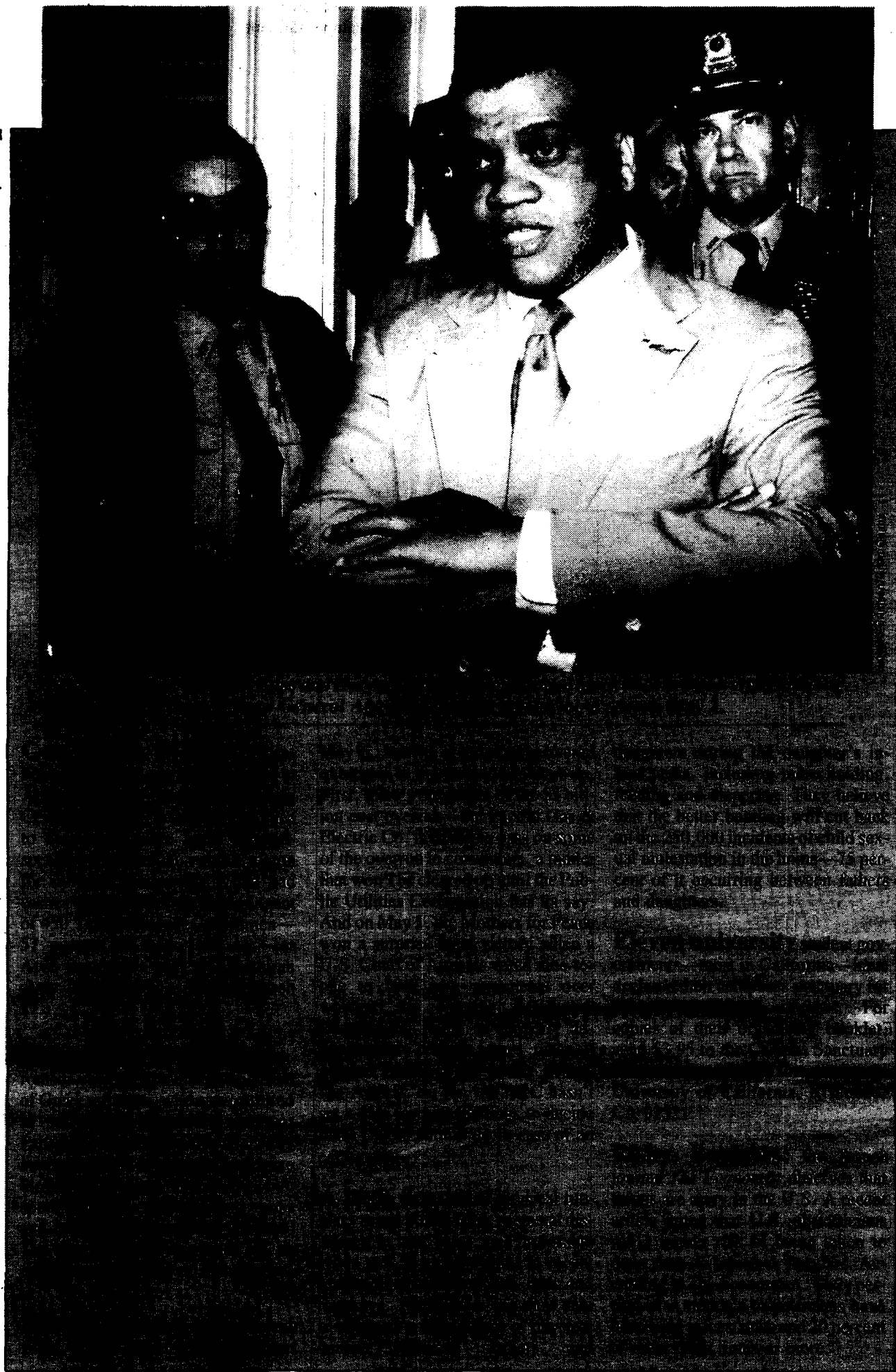
Rev. Stanley Stefancic, minister of one of the

sanctuary churches filing suit, said, "This lawsuit will settle the question of who is upholding the law and who is breaking the law. 'People understand instinctively that the government's position is immoral and wrong.'"

## Gassed in the U.S.A.

The nerve agent, VX, is so lethal that barely a half liter of the substance could kill up to a million people. Yet several private research companies have contracted with the Department of Defense to experiment with VX and other nerve agents. Citing the potential for disaster, Cambridge, Mass., banned such research, precipitating a court battle with the Arthur D. Little Co., which has constructed a new million-dollar laboratory to compete for the lucrative Defense Department contracts. (See In Short, March 13, 1985). While ADL has its troubles, the nerve gas research continues quietly elsewhere. At Battelle Memorial Institute in West Jefferson, Ohio, researchers experiment with gas masks and more efficient gas detection equipment, and test the effects of the nerve agents on the skin and tissue of laboratory animals. Other companies under contract to test chemical weapons for the Army's Chemical Research and Development Command include: Arvin/Calspan in Buffalo, N.Y.; Bendix in Baltimore, Md.; SRI International, Menlo Park, Calif.; Southern Research Institute, Birmingham, Ala.; Systems Science and Software, San Diego, Calif.; Chemical Compound Co., Riverhead, N.Y.; GEOMET Technologies, Inc., in Rockwell, Md.; Midwest Research Institute, Kansas City, Mo.; and the Mine Safety Appliance Co. in Evans City, Pa.

*This week's contributors: David Goodman, Dan Ashby and Tom Kiely*





By Joan Walsh

## BERKELEY

CORPORATE LEADERS WHO DEPICT South African Bishop Desmond Tutu as an agnostic when it comes to the American divestment movement are going to have to find another figurehead, or else lie flat-out. For the Anglican bishop's three-day visit to California last week left no doubters here that Tutu has anything but respect and gratitude for the increasingly effective protests against the country's apartheid regime.

"I would say, let the pressure continue," he told a San Francisco crowd on Sunday, May 12.

Divestiture proponents have gotten used to scrutinizing Tutu's statements for between the lines endorsement of their movement over the years. Advocating divestment is treason in South Africa and would provide Pretoria with an excuse to jail the already outspoken Nobel Peace Prize winner. So the Anglican bishop has remained mostly silent on the issue, though in the past he has seemed to favor divestment only after giving the South African government and its black opposition a chance to reform the country themselves. Apparently, that chance has passed.

This visit, Tutu's admirers didn't have to strain to read a divestment endorsement into his public statements. From Los Angeles to Sacramento, he thanked California's active anti-apartheid movement, and had special words of praise for students and faculty at UC-Berkeley, where a month-long sit-in and almost daily University Hall arrests have put pressure on the UC regents to divest the system's holdings in firms doing business with South Africa.

Tutu's visit balanced mass appearances with quieter political meetings. In Los Angeles he addressed the liberal California Democratic Council. On Mother's Day he moved from a 5,000-person rally at San Francisco's Civic Auditorium to a small reception with state politicians at Oakland's Lake Merritt Hotel to a huge throng at the Allen Temple Baptist Church in black East Oakland.

In Sacramento he addressed a joint session of the California legislature, again outlining the brutality of life under apartheid and praising its opponents here. The legislature is set to discuss its own divestment bill soon, as well as attempts by pro-divestment assemblymembers to block UC's capital budget unless the regents divest their South Africa holdings.

"Help us exert pressure—political pressure, diplomatic pressure, but, above all, economic pressure," Tutu told the legislators. He denounced as "baloney" claims that economic sanctions hurt black South Africans. "I haven't heard that argument about Poland or Nicaragua," Tutu continued the theme in a TV interview later that day. "We are suffering now," he said. "All these people who invest in South Africa are benefiting from it. They are not altruistic."

But it was at Berkeley that Tutu's message seemed clearest. Some 10,000 people waited almost two hours in the blazing sun to hear his emotional thank you.

"I want to thank you for caring so much that you are saying there are some things more important even than good grades. You obviously must be very, very bright to have made the kind of decisions you have made about South Africa.

"As God looks down on you today he's saying, 'Have you seen my children in Berkeley? They're something else.' You are just marvelous."

**Mainstream vs. militance.**

Tutu's visit was good timing for Berkeley's divestment movement. Finals have taken some steam out of the protests, on the eve of a Berkeley meeting May 16 and 17 where the regents agreed to discuss divestment. As the regents meeting approached, some organizers worried that the vacuum left by

*South African Bishop Tutu looked down on a Berkeley crowd of supporters and said, "Have you seen my children in Berkeley? They're something else."*

students and faculty preoccupied with exams would be filled by campus militants, who at points have tried to push demonstrations into confrontations with campus administrators and police.

Mostly the militants are "steps people," the diehard left fringe that began the sit-ins on Sproul Hall steps (now Biko Hall) against the judgment of more mainstream campus anti-apartheid groups (*In These Times*, April 24). The sit-in drew wider support for a time, after UC police cracked down and arrested 158 people without warning in late April. But most groups have since withdrawn official endorsement of the action, tired of confrontations over drug use, sexual harassment and tactical violence. The "establishment" protests are the University Hall arrests organized by Berkeley City Councilmember Nancy Skinner, which have involved more than 300 labor, faculty, religious and community leaders.

The militants, meanwhile, drew the ire of the rest of the movement with a well-publicized march through Berkeley April 30, disrupting business in local banks and parading through Berkeley High School. So far the movement's chief asset has been media credibility. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, which frames all Berkeley news in "What are those crazy radicals up to

now?" terms, has treated the divestment protests with unusual respect. But after the bank spree the paper's stories announced that "radicals"—the Revolutionary Communist Party—had gained control of the movement.

The chief worry on the eve of the regents meeting was that a non-violent blockade planned could turn ugly. The "Biko News," house organ of the steps, was predicting everything from "rallies to riots." Organizers of the officially sanctioned civil disobedience were trying to keep it separate from the spontaneous, militant actions that were expected. "I think it will be quiet and responsible," said Associated Students president Pedro Noguera. "The people who are listened to in this movement are responsible people."

UC sociology professor and New Left chronicler Todd Gitlin was more concerned. A shortage of "reasonable" people at the pre-regents planning meeting was giving inordinate influence to the "militants," Gitlin said, which could hurt the movement's credibility with "regents who are in the middle" on the divestment issue.

**"Dignity."**

The regents won't likely vote on divestment until their June meeting, when a treasurer's

report on divestment's fiscal impact is expected. But there is no question that the protests have had an impact. UC System President David Gardner expects the regents will at least partially divest as a result of the pressure. The issue now is divestment's scope.

Even "conservatives" among the 28 regents will likely vote to divest holdings in companies that refuse to sign the Sullivan Principles, the mostly symbolic fair labor guidelines advanced by General Motors Vice President Leon Sullivan.

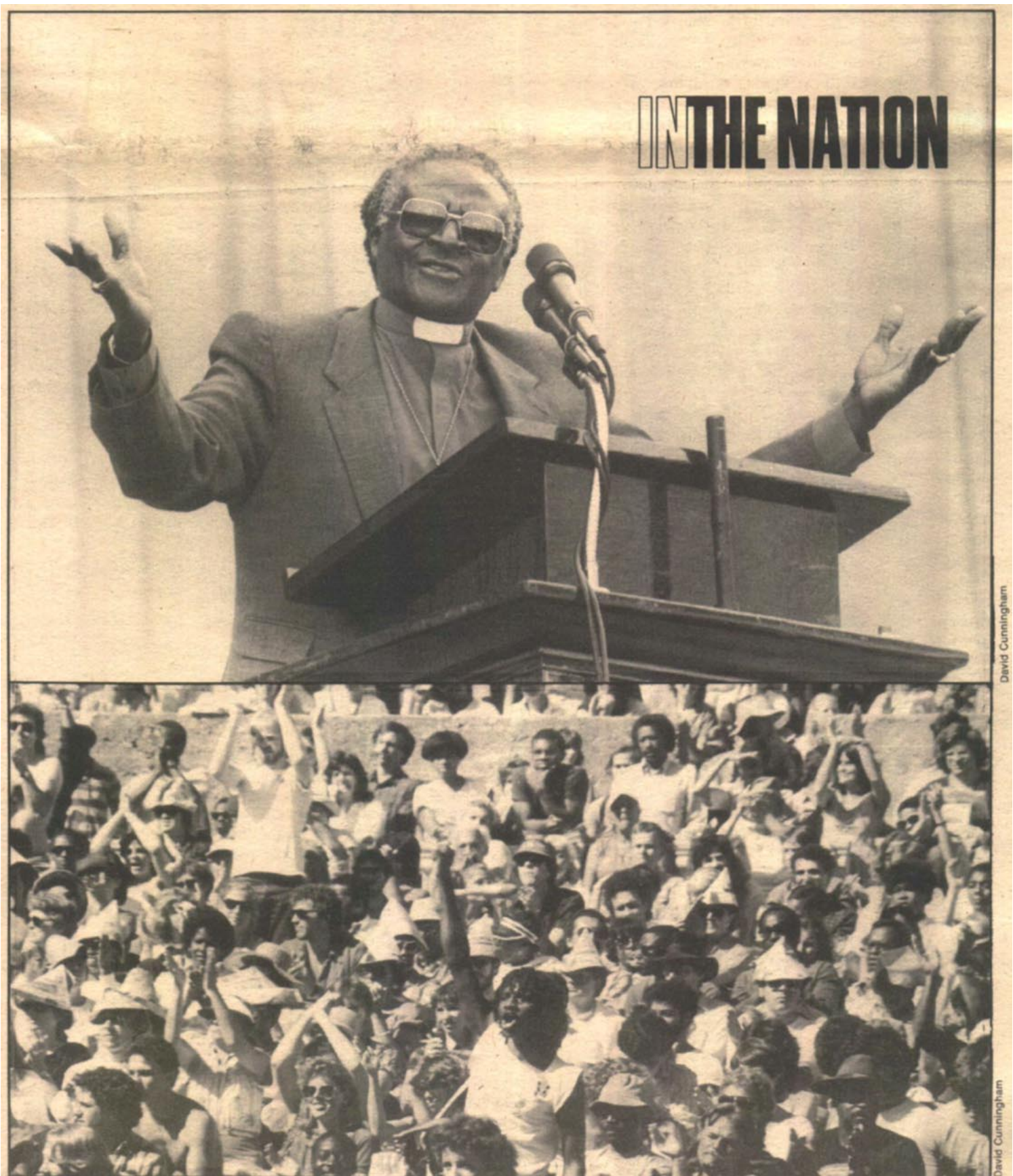
"Full divestment" regents—there are reportedly nine—are expected to advocate a phased plan similar to that adopted by the New York City public employees. The plan divests companies that do business with the South African police and military sectors first, and sells off all holdings within five years.

Tutu himself seemed to underscore the need for the Berkeley coalition to stick to the non-violent tactics of moral persuasion that have gotten it this far with public opinion and university leaders. "This is the other thing I have to commend you for: you feel passionately. You feel deeply. And yet you also say, 'We have a dignity. Because our cause is such a noble cause, it must not be discredited by methods that will make us, when we look back, want to hide our heads in shame. And so you carry out your protests with the dignity that befits and is consistent with the cause that you are espousing.'"

There's no telling how far that part of Tutu's message carried. But there was at least one encouraging sign: someone smuggled a "Blockade the Bastards" sign to where banners were hanging under the podium just before Tutu's speech. Lots of people looked it over. But nobody hung it up.

## CALIFORNIA

# Bishop Tutu praises divestment movement





# Embargo

Continued from page 3

the ruling party who will not have to change their lifestyles."

## Cottage industry.

Due to the shortage of dollars for imports, spare parts and other goods are already in short supply. This has led enterprising individuals to create cottage industries for inventing replacement parts. Under austerity measures announced by the government last week, such innovators will receive special incentives and a special "spare parts bank" has been created. At the same time, energy conservation, encouragement of home gardens and changes in basic grains production form part of efforts to deal with the embargo.

The blockade is seriously affecting the state airline AERONICA, which is losing cargo and passenger traffic to Miami. The airline said it is increasing service to Central American capitals and Mexico to compensate, while seeking other destinations such as Venezuela or Canada.

Sugar refineries are also vulnerable due to almost-complete dependence on U.S. machinery, although exports won't be affected as Washington cut Nicaragua's sugar export quota in 1983. Textiles, chicken and soap production will feel the impact as well. The E. Chamorro Company, producer of 40 percent of Nicaraguan bath soap, has turned to Canada for a shipment of suet

used in the manufacturing process. The company hopes to purchase calcium phosphate for toothpaste from France.

In 1984, almost half of Nicaragua's imports came from other Latin American countries (including 19 percent from Central America, Cuba and the Caribbean), 19 percent came from the U.S., 16 percent came from Western Europe, 12 percent from the Socialist bloc nations and 5 percent came from Japan, the two Chinas, Libya, Algeria and Iran.

Exports largely went to Europe (25 percent), the USSR and East Europe (15 percent), Japan (16 percent), the U.S. (16 percent), China and the North African nations (13 percent). The spread of import/export has thus increased steadily since 1979, under the "four legs" policy of replacing heavy dependence on the U.S. with Europe, the socialist bloc Third World and Latin America.

Some observers foresee a "boomerang effect" similar to the massive international support Nicaragua received when the Reagan administration cut off U.S. wheat sales in 1981. President Reagan's inability to rally Western European and OAS support for the embargo received widespread coverage in the local press, as did the tepid response from other Central American countries.

Honduras and Nicaragua signed a commercial treaty in January. And Nicaragua's strategic position in the isthmus and the traditionally close relationships between the economies of the region will likely all play a big role in how effective the embargo

will be.

"I don't think Reagan understands how integrated the Central American nations are, nor how transnationalized the region is today," said Xavier Gorostiaga, the country's leading private economist. "We are not living in the '60s when the blockade against Cuba began. Today you can obtain U.S. technology from Brazil, Mexico, Canada; the break will not be as severe as was the embargo on Cuba."

## Legal questions.

Speaking to a room packed with international reporters seeking information on the economy, Gorostiaga emphasized political impact over the economic. "I see the unilateral abrogation of the 1956 'trade and friendship treaty' and dismissal of the political will of the U.S. Congress as very significant," he said. "When such a powerful country ignores both international law and other branches of its own government, one must be concerned. This is a problem of values."

Gorostiaga served as adviser to Panamanian President Omar Torrijos during the Panama Canal Treaty negotiations, and said legally President Reagan can only abrogate trade treaties with a two-thirds Senate vote and after one year's notice. He said he also doubts the legality of Reagan declaring Nicaragua a case of "national emergency."

In the political context, the economist said the embargo may purposely intend to push Nicaragua further into the "Eastern bloc"—i.e., a second Cuba—because

Nicaragua presents a model "in between" that other nations might want to emulate. The blockade will also deal a heavy blow to the Contadora peace process, Gorostiaga said.

Life went on normally for most Nicaraguans after the Reagan administration announced the embargo, although the news added to an already tense atmosphere caused largely by economic difficulties. A major Sandinista offensive begun in February has pushed most *contra* forces back close to the Honduran border. Yet intense fighting and ambushing of state vehicles occurred recently in the central region close to Boaca.

"The blockade has created an air of instability," said Nelson Dona, a 24-year-old Managua architect. "People are concerned with how this will cut ties with the U.S., where many have relatives."

Dona is coordinator of a Sandinista Defense Committee, and said a meeting to discuss the embargo had been postponed until after the weekend because of the Nicaraguan baseball championship. The best of seven-game duel, which included a 19-inning cliffhanger, seemed to hold more attention than the embargo. "Perhaps because Nicaraguans are already managing in the face of great odds," added Dona.

As usual, much of the story has been played out in Washington, where criticism abounds over President Daniel Ortega's trip to the Soviet Union and East-West Europe. Yet Managua Vice Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco defended the trip as an economic necessity, in a country that last year imported \$800 million but exported only \$425 million and has suffered \$700 million in damages from the *contra* war. Tinoco pointed out that Ortega also traveled to West Europe in search of economic aid to help close the trade gap and overcome the U.S. embargo.

"The vision in Washington is so centrist," he said. "The trip has nothing to do with ideology. It's a question of survival, of hunger."

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# First time for unisex insurance

By Mike Dennison

HELENA, MT

**A**NY WOMAN WHO HAS BOUGHT health insurance knows she pays more than a man does for the same product. What she may not know, however, is that sex discrimination is present in most types of insurance policies. Women over 29 usually pay the same rate as men for auto insurance, even though they generally drive less and have fewer accidents. And while women may receive "discounted" prices on life insurance, their policies pay out lower benefits because, statistically, women live longer than men.

This type of sex discrimination will be outlawed in the state of Montana. Its comprehensive "unisex insurance" law—the first of its kind in the nation—bans the use of a person's gender or marital status in setting rates for any type of insurance. Passed in 1983 and set to go into effect this year, the law withstood a furious lobbying effort by the insurance industry to repeal it this spring. Defeating the powerful insurance lobby marked a key success for women's groups both in Montana and nationwide.

"I'm hoping that this will be a lead for other states," said Anne Brodsky, a lobbyist for a coalition of women's groups in Montana, "and that ultimately Congress will pass a gender-free insurance law."

Yet the victory in Montana has been an exception to the rule. In the past two years, attempts to get unisex insurance laws on the books have failed in 19 states and the District of Columbia. Similar legislation also has stalled in Congress.

Part of the problem is that insurance is so complex that it is a difficult grassroots organizing issue. As one women's lobbyist pointed out, the insurance industry likes things that way. "They want you to think it's boring," he said. "We've all been trained to be totally uninterested in insurance."

Yet unisex insurance has been on the political agenda of women's groups since it became clear in the late '70s that the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would fail. The National Organization for Women (NOW) has made the insurance industry a key target.

Celinda Lake, a congressional researcher and former women's lobbyist in Montana, said ERA proponents also believe the insurance industry was influential in defeating the amendment in key states like Illinois and Florida. "One of the major impacts of the ERA would have been to change how they did business," she said.

## Lobbying muscle.

The insurance industry's lobbying muscle was also flexed considerably as the industry tried to repeal Montana's unisex insurance law during the 1985 legislature. State Farm Insurance sent 92,000 letters to Montana policyholders forecasting large rate increases for young women's auto insurance and urging them to tell legislators to vote for the repeal. Other insurance companies followed suit, although on a smaller scale. Aetna and U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty telephoned customers and read them a form letter denouncing unisex insurance. If the customers agreed, their "signatures" were placed on a letter, which was mailed to lawmakers as though it came from a constituent. In addition, Phyllis Schlafly's conservative Eagle Forum and the industry fielded a bevy of national and local lobbyists to press the industry's case.

Their argument was simple: statistics show substantial behavioral differences between men and women, and insurance rates should and do reflect those differences. A person's sex is the most significant factor

in figuring rates, they claimed—more important than a person's age, occupation, health habits or, in auto insurance, driving record or number of miles driven.

"It is a fact that young women drive better than young men," said Bonnie Tippy, a Montana lobbyist for the American Alliance of Insurers. "It is a fact that women live longer than men. No one disputes that."

Yet Tom Towe, a state senator from Billings, Mont., noted that such reasoning had a familiar and odious ring to it. "I couldn't

"There is only one reason why the insurance industry has been lobbying so hard against this law," said state Sen. Patricia Regan just moments before the Montana Senate killed off the repeal attempt, "and that reason is profit. They overcharge women on premiums and underpay them on benefits."

## Why Montana?

That the battle for unisex insurance succeeded in Montana while it has failed al-

changes in auto insurance rates.

"We just wanted to let the world know that [unisex legislation] has had no bad impact on the auto insurance industry," said Jean Carlson, Michigan's deputy insurance commissioner. "The state is still standing and cars are still driving. We have had virtually no adverse public reaction."

Rates in Michigan did increase moderately for women under 25, a "risk group" historically favored by auto insurers, while young men's rates tended to fall. But for the other 80 percent of Michigan's drivers, unisex insurance has had little or no effect on their auto insurance rates, the report said.

In Arizona, the state was forced by a 1983 U.S. Supreme Court decision to stop offering employee-retirement plans through insurance companies that paid lower benefits to women. The most popular plan paid out benefits in monthly annuity

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**MEMBER/EMPLOYEE INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO FILE A CLAIM:**  
1. COMPLETE A SEPARATE CLAIM FORM FOR EACH INSURED PERSON.  
2. COMPLETE PART A IN FULL FOR ALL CLAIMS YOU HAVE INCURRED IF CLAIM IS FOR:

IF ACCIDENT, GIVE DATE

**(A) PROVIDER'S CHARGES**  
GIVE THIS CLAIM FORM TO YOUR DOCTOR OR PROVIDER. HE OR SHE MUST COMPLETE PART B ON THE REVERSE SIDE AND SEND TO OUR CLAIMS ADMINISTRATION OFFICE.

**(B) OTHER CHARGES**  
ATTACH ORIGINAL COPY OF BILLS AND SEND TO:

**(C) MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT CLAIM**  
SUBMIT THIS FULLY COMPLETED CLAIM FORM, INCLUDE YOUR HOSPITAL BILL, IF APPLICABLE, SHOWING ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE DATES AND THE MEDICARE "EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS" FORM.

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WHILE WORKING? YES ☐ NO ☐  
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**NOTE:** The insurance payment for hospital... If you sign the Authorization To Pay Benefits directly to Provider which appears at the bottom of this form, the payment will be sent directly to you. If the Authorization is not signed, payment will be sent directly to you.

Questions regarding the payment of claims may be addressed to:

In These Times Graphic

believe that people were coming before us and testifying that men and women acted differently because of their chromosomes and genes," he said. "That was the same argument used by people who discriminated against and mistreated blacks, or Indians."

Matching the industry's lobbying blitz was a coalition of labor, civil rights and women's groups that included NOW, the AFL-CIO, local teachers' unions, the Society of Business and the Montana Federation of Business and Professional Women. They did not dispute the industry's claim of statistical differences between men and women, but countered that a person's sex was just one of many factors used by insurers to set rates. "Sex is just the easiest way to classify people," Brodsky said.

As recently as 40 years ago, a person's gender or marital status was not routinely used to calculate risk and rates for insurance. And while sex discrimination has become common practice in setting rates for many types of insurance, it is applied selectively and almost always to the benefit of insurers and their preferred customers. Most of the time, those preferred customers are men.

most everywhere else is no coincidence, for Montana has a long history of supporting women's rights. Montanans gave women the right to vote in 1914, six years before the 19th Amendment was passed, and they elected the first woman to Congress: Jeannette Rankin, in 1916. The equal rights clause in Montana's constitution is one of the strongest in the nation, stating that no "person, firm, corporation or institution shall discriminate against any person...on account of race, color, sex, culture, social origin or condition, or political or religious ideas."

What will happen to the price of insurance in Montana? Insurance firms forecast higher rates for some women in auto and life insurance, while unisex insurance proponents say it should benefit most women and some men and have no significant impact on others. But the outcome is uncertain, since no other state has passed such a comprehensive law.

There are precedents on a smaller scale, however. Michigan is one of four states with a unisex law applied only to auto insurance. In 1983, the Michigan Insurance Bureau released a study showing that the two-year-old law had caused no drastic

One women's lobbyist pointed out that "we've all been trained to be totally uninterested in insurance." The insurance industry likes things that way.

payments, similar to some life-insurance policies. To comply with the court decision, the companies with which Arizona did business simply raised the cash value of women's policies, or gave men the option of higher premiums or a lower cash value.

One Montanan concerned about the impact unisex insurance would have on consumers was Ray Harbin, a state representative and independent insurance agent from Ronan. But after researching the issue and talking with insurance companies, Harbin said he became convinced it would have no drastic impact on the industry or his insurance customers. He said with the insurance industry's sophisticated computer equipment, it should take no more than a few minutes to refigure the entire rate structure without gender as a factor.

"Insurance may cost some people more, and for some it may cost less," Harbin said. "But I think that 10 years from now we'll look back at this issue and wonder why we made such a big deal about it."



## FRANCE

# Propaganda war stars Yves Montand

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**A**LTHOUGH FRANCOIS MITTERRAND has expressed more misgivings about Reagan's "Star Wars" project than any other West European head of state, there has been no public debate or criticism of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in France to compare with that in West Germany (see *In These Times*, May 15). Politicians in parliament spend their time squabbling about relatively trivial matters. And to most of the mass media, anything the Soviet Union doesn't like must be positive.

During a long April 28 TV appearance intended to make him appear less presidential and more human (and thus perhaps improve his popularity), Mitterrand expressed strong reservations about the SDI. He said he was interested in the technology but questioned the strategy. The French president advocates a European research program (Eureka) to develop the technologies favored by the SDI, without necessarily tying them to Star Wars military goals.

But over the past few years the French media, especially government-owned TV, have exaggerated the Soviet threat and flat-

tered Ronald Reagan to such an extent that the French public is now conditioned to be much more receptive to the logic of Star Wars than Mitterrand seemed to be. Just 10 days before Mitterrand expressed his doubts, a 90-minute TV special starring singer and actor Yves Montand argued that "Star Wars" or its equivalent was necessary for both technological and military reasons.

Entitled "La Guerre en Face," the Montand show was only the most blatant recent instance of constant one-sided propaganda. "Never has French television been more anti-Communist and more anti-Soviet," a leading liberal journalist, Jean Francois Kahn, observed recently. He wasn't opposed, only surprised. "Who could have imagined that with the left in power there would be such a flood of anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism over television?" he exclaimed.

The Soviet embassy lodges an official protest over one of the program's imaginary scenarios, which portrayed Russian tanks conquering Western Europe with scarcely any trouble at all after launching a sneak attack. *Le Monde's* military affairs correspondent Michel Tatu justified the unlikely story with the simple argument that a country (the USSR) with so many

weapons "must be up to something."

All this was obviously designed to help reinforce what the Germans call "enemy images," necessary for military buildups. The program was designed to arouse fear not only of Russians but also of Arabs and German pacifists.

"Germany and France should be the nucleus of a European defense," Montand observed sagely toward the end of the war show. "But Germany worries France..." Film clips then showed Germany overrun with (shudder) pacifists. To make the whole thing scarier, some of the footage supposedly representing peace demonstrations was actually taken from clashes between police and woods protectors in the battle over extension of Frankfurt airport.

The narration explained the German peace movement by Germans' unwillingness to interpret all the good living provided for them for 35 years by the American nuclear umbrella and get down to serious matters. "these young Germans are already giving in," concluded Montand angrily.

The third big scare was represented by an imaginary wave of Syrian, Libyan and North African "boat people" swarming onto the coasts of southern France in "indescribable disorder" as a result of some unspecified conflict sweeping the Arab world. This fantasy episode was commented upon by Dr. Bernard Kouchner, sponsor of the ship currently being sent to the South China Sea to rescue and, even more, to call attention to Vietnamese boat people. All those Third World conflicts concern us, so we must do "something firm," concluded Kouchner.

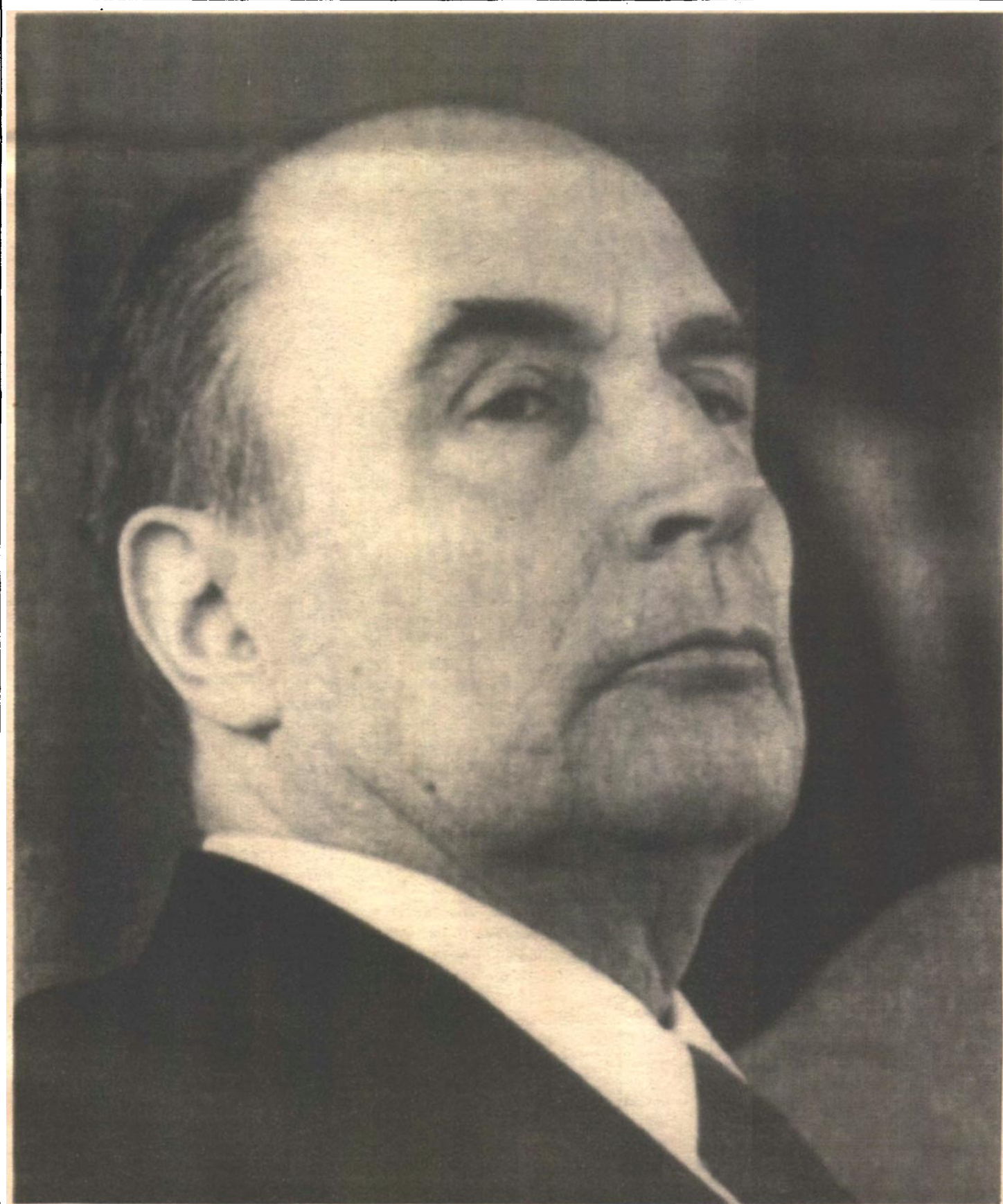
In his comments, the political purpose behind the supposedly purely humanitarian concern for boat people becomes clearer all the time. This is a French variation of the argument being used by the Reagan administration to justify counterrevolution in Central America: Communism produces refugees, so to keep out refugees we must overthrow Communist regimes in the Third World.

The image of hordes of Arab refugees invading France came shortly after Michel Albert, a leading member of the brain trust behind "La Guerre en Face" (as well as last year's political spectacular, "Vive la crise!"), warned that Europe's birth rate was dropping and that the old world risked "lying down in defeat."

A choice sequence was designed to stigmatize anti-militarism. Indulgently, Yves Montand recalled that "because of colonial wars [in Indochina and Algeria], we got to be rather anti-militarist. Even today anything military provokes annoyance or laughter."

This statement was illustrated by a scene of silly girls at a teenage party giggling at a couple of lonely-looking cadets. While the clean-cut young military lads stand around moping, the silly girls dance and smooch with longer-haired civilians. The kissing is interrupted by...a nuclear blast! Everyone flees in panic. A missile destroys the statue of liberty (the smaller one in Paris, apparently). That'll show civilians not to appreciate their military men.

Embedded in all this propaganda imagery, the show's actual military argument was deliberately blurred. The gist was that (1) technological progress and Star Wars



Among the bitter thoughts going through his head as he waited 20 minutes for American Secret Service agents to unblock his official limousine after a Bonn economic summit dinner, French President Francois Mitterrand probably reflected on the ingratitude of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The German chancellor, totally absorbed in displaying his devoted friendship with Ronald Reagan, had completely forgotten his commitments to the French president. Mitterrand was left alone to balk at Star Wars and stall against a round of trade negotiations that, if the Reagan administration has its way, will ruin Germany as well as French farmers.

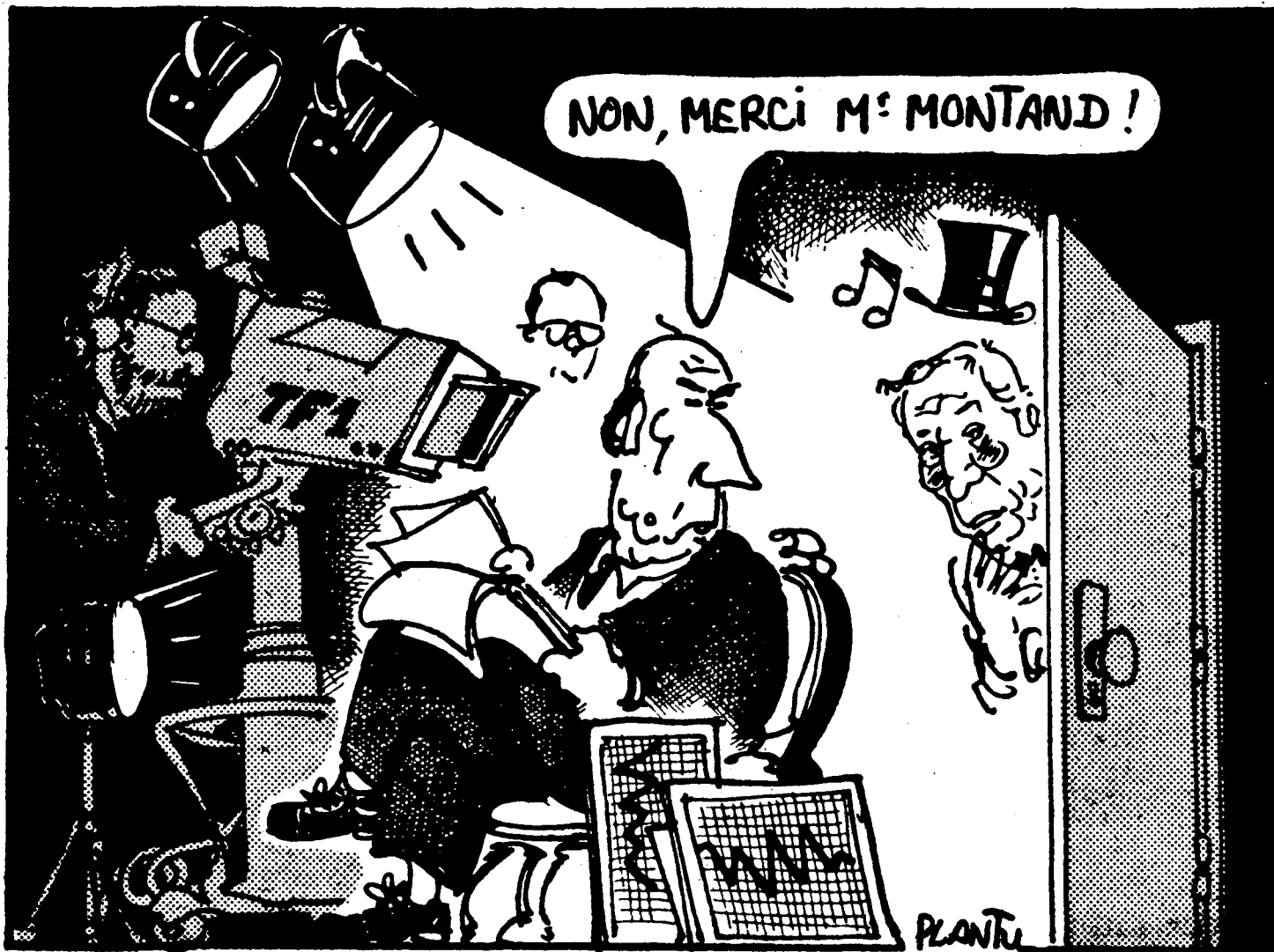
This was the thanks he got for holding Kohl's hand in Verdun cemetery, for indirectly supporting Kohl against the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and for favoring Pershing II and cruise missile deployment in his speech to the Bundestag before the 1983 German elections.

Whatever his bitter reflections, there is no sign of Mitterrand or anyone else in the French government thinking they may have made a mistake in supporting the German right against the German left. The French continue to regard the German left, the SPD and, above all, the peace movement as carriers of a dangerous "nationalist neutralism," and to believe that an all-out French effort has been necessary to keep West Germany "anchored to the West." It seems to occur to no one that this quite unnecessary effort may simply be helping to deliver West Germany, and perhaps France too, to the Pentagon.

Thus Mitterrand is set to make Kohl feel guilty for his ingratitude and to persist in trying to establish a sort of close Franco-German cooperation that, ironically, might be possible with the SPD but that is scarcely possible with the conservative government in power in Bonn with Mitterrand's endorsement. It is scarcely possible because of a factor the French Socialists seem slow in perceiving: the hostile, not to say contemptuous attitude of conservative West German business circles (precisely those interests represented by the Kohl government) toward French business methods. "It's

**French President Francois Mitterrand**





are making obsolete nuclear deterrence, the basis of French defense doctrine since de Gaulle; (2) therefore, France must modernize its battlefield weapons, its doctrine and its research and development programs.

The Russian tank invasion was part of

the "Coppel scenario" illustrating the argument of retired Air Force Gen. Etienne Coppel that Soviet forces could overwhelm NATO defenses in a conventional attack using surprise and chemical weapons, without a nuclear shot being fired by either side.

Since in France every idea must be of French origin, this is called the "Coppel theory," although it is simply a Gallic marketing of NATO commander Bernard Rogers' pitch for building up and modernizing NATO's battlefield forces, including

chemical weapons.

In West Germany, variants of this build-up and shift to offensive European battlefield strategy are well known as the "Rogers Plan," AirLand Battle, and "Follow-on-Forces Attack" (FOFA), officially adopted by NATO three years ago. Rogers' concept of combined electronic guidance, battlefield nuclear and chemical weapons provides a use—and thus a market—for "emerging technology" weapons.

Strategy specialist Pierre Lellouche told the French TV audience that all Soviet units are armed with chemical weapons, whereas NATO has none—a very dubious assertion on both counts. "The only way to deter a chemical weapons attack is to have chemical weapons," Lellouche concluded, as if there were no other imaginable conclusion.

In an interview programmed to follow the Montand special, defense minister Charles Hernu disagreed slightly. Hernu seems to be trying to hang onto the deterrence doctrine and avoid uncontrolled arms escalation, but he is being outflanked by the Reaganites. "Who says we wouldn't respond to chemical warfare by a nuclear strike?" Hernu countered, praising the "marvelous uncertainty" of nuclear deterrence.

### Ignorance is bliss.

Nowhere was there a hint that serious efforts are being undertaken by former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and others to work out terms of a chemical weapons-free zone in Europe, or that the Soviet Union has offered to negotiate a ban on manufacture and stockpiling of chemical weapons, including inspection provisions, to complete the existing international convention banning their use.

The show's main commercial was for Star Wars research, which it was claimed would cost only about \$20 per year for each European. "A good investment," said Michel Albert, so long as carried out on a European level.

Albert compared Star Wars research to the American Apollo program, which is credited with giving the U.S. its technological lead, and warned in so many words that "if we miss this chance, we'll be really out of the running."

Informed French opinion is not as unanimous as it has been made to appear on the small screen. Some hope that by going really too far in bias and error, "La Guerre en Face" may have helped stimulate the real debate the country needs. A new association called *Droit contre Raison d'Etat* (legality versus governmental injustice) brought suit against the show's producers for "dishonest advertising." The jurists' group charged that the products advertised, notably Star Wars, were presented in such a way as to deceive the television audience.

Some experts have warned that the SDI, far from providing civilian technological fallouts as did Apollo, could actually seriously impede the progress already underway in civilian uses of space by increasing the dangers and resulting costs of civilian satellites.

Regis Debray called the analogy between Star Wars and the Apollo program "strategic Utopia," because "nobody on the moon was determined to stop Armstrong from setting foot there, whereas in strategy, there is an adversary taking countermeasures."

Since leaving his job as presidential advisor for a seat on the Conseil d'Etat (a sort of supreme court), Debray has published a book *Les Empires contre l'Europe* that pleads for European independence from the U.S., which he considers the only real world superpower. Debray complains that the French overestimate the Soviet threat while underestimating the dangers of subservience to the U.S. French ignorance of U.S. power structure is "more or less total," he observed in a recent interview.

But most prominent Parisian intellectuals are aboard the Reagan bandwagon—at least until the Paris fashion changes again, perhaps after a drop in the dollar. ■

## Eureka: a word, but not a way

another economic system," some of them say of France.

Indeed, German labor is also wary of what Karl Marx described as the "usurious" nature of French capitalism. But the SPD is currently motivated to try to overcome economic differences for political reasons in a way conservatives are not. Thus the SPD has come out clearly against Star Wars and in favor of space cooperation with France.

As Star Wars has evolved into the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Europeans have realized that it is no longer a crack-pot science fiction idea. Now it is an effective plan to drain European brains and technology to the U.S. for purposes determined by the Pentagon. This follows the drain of more than \$400 billion in foreign capital, two-fifths of it from Europe, lured by high interest rates to finance the U.S. deficit, which, in turn, finances the SDI.

In late April the French president called for creation of a "European Research Coordination Agency," EUREKA for short, as an alternative to the SDI. Just as no one seems to know exactly what is the gigantic pig-in-a-poke called SDI, no one knows what EUREKA is either. As a literary man, Mitterrand has discovered a striking logo, but as yet no way to transform it into reality.

### Unanswered questions.

There are two basic unanswered questions about EUREKA: what's it for, and where's the money coming from? The immediate, one might say emergency purpose is to provide a European source of subsidies to European high-tech before it is bought off by the SDI.

But to do what? Mitterrand has said that, unlike the SDI, a European research program should stress civilian rather than military applications of technology. But since the fields of research ("fifth generation" computers, micro-electronics, artificial intelligence, new materials, electronic optics, lasers) are the same as those to be subsidized

by the SDI—without any clear definition of their eventual use—EUREKA is likely to be nothing other than the "European Strategic Defense Initiative (ESDI)" advocated by the right-wing Bavarian leader Franz Josef Strauss. Or, in other words, it is an essentially military research program meant to bring a third player, Western Europe, onto the Star Wars battlefield.

Financing a rival program is difficult in hard times. "The Keynesian approach is possible only for the Americans who feed their budget deficit with European savings," said European Commissioner Claude Cheysson, who was Mitterrand's foreign minister until the end of last year, in a recent interview in *Libération*.

"Our industrialists are no idiots," said Cheysson. "They know very well that if an American is in charge, he'll define the strategy in the U.S., decide the point where profit is taken and reserve the promising markets for himself. But to avoid subcontracting, Europe must develop its own research program, offering at least as much to our industrialists as the American undertaking."

Cheysson said the SDI's military purpose is to make U.S. land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles invulnerable by the time—10 or 15 years—the USSR may be able to spot nuclear submarines. But he thought the most important innovation was to inject huge sums into research. "In the U.S., however, you can't just appropriate massive sums of capital to industry by simple government decision; that is contrary to the sacred rules of the free market. So a 'justification' is needed: we are threatened, the safeguard of the free world. Giving a boost to advanced research is a convincing argument, and I really don't see why it has to be justified by that Cold War hysteria."

At the same time, Cheysson said he was against the SDI because he was afraid it may encourage neutralist and anti-nuclear feelings in West Germany. "We made a considerable effort to convince the Germans that it was necessary to

deploy Pershing missiles to counter the Soviet SS20s," the former French foreign minister recalled. "Only a few months later they are told that those missiles are outdated and will soon be useless."

"Why do you think that Francois Mitterrand made his speech to the Bundestag?" Cheysson went on. "We are anxious for our allies to keep wanting to defend themselves, to feel patriotic. If they lose their patriotism, how will it be possible to build a united Europe?"

Fear of German "neutralism" makes the French blind to the nature of the German "patriotism" that they are cultivating so assiduously. Cheysson is no doubt sincere in wanting a European research program to develop European technology without the hysterical Cold War justifications. But it is precisely the political aspect of Reagan's Star Wars that appeals to the German right, which wants to use it in an "anti-red" campaign to defeat the SPD in the 1987 elections.

Cheysson observed correctly that American "arrogance"—the Reagan administration's "ignorance or refusal to see the reality of their Latin American neighbors or their European allies"—tends to push those neighbors or those allies together. But much still keeps them apart. Regis Debray recently observed that "French arrogance" has a similar effect in Europe, when for instance the French insist on being in charge of an industrial cooperation program.

EUREKA was launched without any serious diplomatic or technical preparation. And as other countries fail to jump at the idea, it is all too easy for the French to conclude that they are the only "good Europeans" (although they have been scarcely receptive to "European" ideas originating elsewhere, in Italy, for example).

Defining the basic goals of technological progress in constructive rather than destructive terms remains the fundamental problem for Europeans, and not only for Europeans. Failure to think of anything to do with technology other than prepare for Star Wars could mark the final, fatal failure of the human imagination.

—D.J.



By Paul Glickman

TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS

"THIS IS NOT A CRIME," SAID Rudolfo Carranza, a 50-year-old Honduran peasant. On April 10 he and his 11 children had joined 56 other landless families in seizing several hundred acres of idle government land in the fertile Comayagua valley. "We're hungry," he said. "We need the land."

Standing in front of three hastily erected lean-tos, Carranza explained that he and his neighbors had cultivated the nearby hills until the government built a huge cement plant next to their village. Now the hills are off limits because the factory uses dynamite to extract rock for the cement.

As Carranza spoke, dozens of children, their bellies swollen by malnutrition, swarmed all over a visitor's car. Several women cooked on makeshift stoves, which consisted of bricks piled on top of open fires. "The question is hunger," he repeated. "Our stomachs need an answer."

Carranza was taking part in a nationwide series of land takeovers orchestrated by the National Peasant Union (UNC). Over two days, about 30,000 peasants "recuperated" about 75,000 acres of land across the country, according to a union spokesman.

Honduran *campesinos* had seized land on a national level only once before, in 1975. The union timed this spring's actions to coincide with the anniversary of the killing of three peasants during a land takeover on April 10, 1984.

Union leaders said the takeovers were motivated by frustrations with the National Agrarian Institute's (INA) failure to adequately carry out the country's agrarian reform law. Under the law, public or private land not fulfilling its "social function" can be taken by the state and distributed to landless farmers. The INA had defined the land's social function as growing crops or raising cattle.

"Many people have waited two, three, even eight years for the INA to respond to their request for land," said Peasant Union Secretary General Marcial Caballero. "It's spring, the time for planting, and the people are desperate. We saw no other road left to us."

INA Director Gustavo Alfaro quickly denounced the seizures, accusing the union of trying to destabilize the government. Over the next few days, the security forces arrested 137 people and forced most of the squatters off the occupied lands. A UNC official said that on one farm in Yoro province, an air force helicopter dispersed the

IN THE WORLD

HONDURAS

## Peasants orchestrate nationwide land grabs

peasants by spraying the vicinity with machine gun fire.

In most cases, the evicted peasants took the land over again after the soldiers left. But Rudolfo Carranza's group was less fortunate—government troops remained on the land after removing the squatters.

The UNC appealed to Armed Forces Chief General Walter Lopez Reyes after the arrests, and Lopez ordered the release of all those detained.

Honduras is situated in the eye of the Central American hurricane: it is bordered

by El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. While the U.S. argues that the Sandinistas pose the greatest threat to Honduran security, many observers in Tegucigalpa regard land reform as the key issue facing the country.

"The landless peasant is a potential guerrilla," warned the UNC's Caballero.

About 40 percent of Honduras' three million peasants are landless, according to Agency for International Development (AID) figures. The ranks of the landless increased sharply in the '50s, when the U.S. banana companies and other large land-owners began evicting peasants from their estates to raise cattle and to make room for export crops such as cotton, coffee and sugar. The country's banana workers had successfully unionized in 1954, and they were the first to organize peasant resistance to the evictions.

Pressure from the nascent peasant movement led to the creation of the INA in 1961, and to the passage of the first agrarian reform law the following year. The law established the concept of expropriation of land not fulfilling its "social function." But the large landowners, particularly the banana companies, convinced the National Congress to amend the law to make it virtually impossible to expropriate private land.

The INA did almost nothing during agrarian reform's first decade. During that period, the government awarded an average of just 6,000 acres to 500 families per year. And many times the INA acted only after a group of peasants had taken over a piece of property.

But in late 1972 a group of reformist military officers, led by Gen. Oswaldo Lopez Arellano, staged a coup. The Lopez Arellano government recognized the need for genuine land reform as a means of forestalling serious social unrest. By early 1975, the National Congress had passed a rougher version of the earlier agrarian reform law.

The law has made it easier for the government to expropriate private land. Individual land holdings are subject to confiscation if they exceed a certain size—1,200 acres in

most parts of the country. Landowners who lose their property are compensated for any improvements made on the land.

The land reform process peaked in 1974-75, when the government awarded more than 100,000 acres to 7,500 families. But since Roberto Suazo Cordova was elected president of a civilian government in 1982, the INA has given out only 50,000 acres to about 4,000 families a year. INA officials maintain, however, they are working as quickly as possible within the confines of the law.

INA Assistant Director Jamie Murillo said the government is "just trying to comply with the law" in the face of scant resources. Tapping a copy of the 300-page reform law on his desk, he told *In These Times*, "We never deviate from this little book."

The INA comes under attack from peasant and landowner alike. Caballero said the INA was against peasants in most land claims, charging that "law is used for the big economic interests, not for the peasants." However, Fernando Lardizabal, president of the Honduran Cattle Owners Federation, claimed the INA is "totally partial to the peasants."

Lardizabal is a bitter opponent of agrarian reform. He said that peasants who own property in one province are taking over land in other provinces under the guise of being landless. "There are no landless peasants in our country," he argued. "That's a fallacy."

The INA's Murillo smiled at Lardizabal's contention that Honduras has no landless farmers, but he agreed that "there may be three people with land in one province seeking land in another province." The INA began taking a census of the peasant population last November, but the project was abruptly stopped in the face of peasant opposition. A UNC official said the INA "never consulted us about the census. We have no idea how they want to utilize it."

After the initial crackdown on the April 10-11 land seizures, the INA and the union agreed to form seven regional commissions. The commissions spent a week traveling around the country, visiting the sites of the takeovers and investigating the peasants' claims.

### Union leaders said the takeovers were motivated by frustrations with the National Agrarian Institute's failure to carry out the country's agrarian reform law.

The commissions found merit in the claims of 78 out of the 83 peasant groups that had occupied land. INA Director Alfaro said the commissions only initiated a long process. "Now begins a series of steps that we must determine whether the property is private state land, the value of any improvements and the size of the parcels in question," he said. "In the best of circumstances this will take two to three months."

The union accuses the INA of dragging its feet. "We're giving them until mid-May to deliver the land," said union official Lucas Aguilera. "If they fail to do so, we may carry out more recuperations."

Caballero admitted that "more takeovers could lead to more beatings, jailings and perhaps killings. But we are convinced that the little that has been done about agrarian reform in Honduras has come about because of sacrifices by the peasants and pressure from their organizations."

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**Syrian President Hafez Assad affirmed in January that "Syria will lead the Palestinian struggle henceforth."**

toll on the Democratic Alliance infrastructure. Joint leadership between the Popular Front and the Democratic Front has not existed since November, and for several months the Alliance itself has been in a state of review in an attempt to reach shared positions.

In response to the Hussein-Arafat agreement of February 11—which outlined a joint Jordanian-PLO negotiating framework and "the surrenderist policies" he sees it representing—Habash renewed his call for the formation of a wide front. By "wide front" he means the Democratic Alliance plus the National Alliance, along with some independent personalities. His call culminated in the March 25 announcement here by Khaled Fahoum, former speaker of the Palestine National Council, that Habash's Popular Front, the entire National Alliance and a small Democratic Alliance faction had jointly formed the Palestinian National Salvation Front.

This new association views itself as a "provisional framework," and, although it has the effect of accentuating the differences between Habash and Hawatmeh, it apparently does not seek to supplant the Democratic Alliance. Its stated aims are the abrogation of the February 11 Hussein-Arafat accord and the stepping up of the armed struggle against Israel—a commitment that its six constituent factions see as having been abandoned by Arafat's Fateh.

#### **Democratic Front.**

Absent from the National Salvation Front, the Democratic Front points to Arab constraints in regard to the armed struggle and argues that borders cannot simply be invented over which resistance operations can be carried out. As a consequence, it is emphasizing counter-activities within the occupied territories, and a higher level of operations is already evident there.

The Democratic Front also stresses the necessity of starting an all-inclusive dialog without preconditions. It sees itself—and the entire Democratic Alliance—as playing a unifying role that aims at reaching a position where a new National Council can be convened for the purpose of "adjusting the imbalance" that issues from the Amman council. Toward this end, it has pursued intensified contacts with Fateh since December.

Realizing that a Fateh-Democratic Alliance *rapprochement* is not in its current interest, Syria has made it clear to all Democratic Alliance parties that where they should be is with the National Alliance. And to underline that point, Assad has taken care to see that the ways and means given to the Democratic Alliance are less than those allowed the National Alliance. The Democratic Front in particular, perhaps because of its key role in reunification efforts, has had its access to information and its freedom of movement curtailed.

Yet despite their shared condemnation of Arafat's "autocratic tendencies"—which they see as the root cause of all the pains and problems of the last few years—there is little likelihood that the Democratic and National Alliances will together form an alternative PLO or hold an alternative Palestine National Council. The Democratic Alliance has resisted that option because they see it as sanctifying a division of the PLO (which would mean two PLOs) as well as relegating themselves to the status of a Syrian puppet. And the National Alliance, which pushed for an alternative PNC at the time of the Amman

*Continued on page 22*

# The PLO at a critical juncture

By Roger Gaess

DAMASCUS, SYRIA

**E**VEN MORE UBIQUITOUS THAN the larger-than-life portraits of President Hafez Assad or Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini are the Palestinian and Syrian flags draped side by side on building facades and walls, whether here or in smaller cities such as Deraa.

Since the 17th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, held last November in Amman, these have been the outer symbols of what has remained the key word in the Syrian media vocabulary: "legitimacy." And legitimacy here has in effect meant Syrian control of the Damascus-based Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) factions that boycotted the Amman PNC and oppose Yasir Arafat's Fateh-led PLO.

In this post-Beirut period, the PLO as a whole finds itself at the center of a tug of war between the two competing Arab axes (the "radical" alignment of Syria-Libya-Iran and the Jordanian-Egyptian-Iraqi "moderates"). A major challenge facing Arafat, as he pushes his fragmented PLO along a moderate course, is how to broaden

his base within the organization.

That essentially translates into finding a means of reintegrating all or at least a substantial part of the leftist Democratic Alliance, whose four Marxist groups include George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Such support is needed by Arafat if his mainstream PLO is to carry sufficient weight into any advanced stage of the peace process.

Despite Assad's affirmation at the ruling Baath Party's annual meeting in January that "Syria will lead the Palestinian struggle henceforth," his control of the Damascus-based factions has been neither uniform nor total. The ultra-radical factions that compose the National Alliance are solidly in the Syrian camp and have been since their Syrian-backed armed rebellion drove Arafat and his supporters from Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and Tripoli in late 1983. But the Democratic Alliance has generally continued to uphold the independence of PLO decision-making in the face of Syrian pressure.

Rumblings to the contrary, Fateh, Syria and the National Alliance are all aware that not far down the road the Democratic Alli-

ance has crucial cards to play. In the occupied territories, its following is significant and vocal. It's probable that the Democratic Alliance's trump card will determine the ultimate success or failure of any diplomatic initiatives undertaken by Arafat in conjunction with the so-called moderate Arab states. The final positioning of Hawatmeh and Habash will set the definition of representational legitimacy as well. In their different ways, Habash and Hawatmeh have moved themselves to center stage in the play within a play.

The feud between Arafat and Fateh on the one hand and Syria's Assad and the National Alliance on the other has taken its

## Who's who in the Palestinian camp

**Al-Fateh** is the dominant PLO group. Led by Yasir Arafat and headquartered in Tunis, it is nonideological in character and comprises an estimated 65-80 percent of the PLO membership.

The factions based in Damascus are, to varying degrees, opposed to Arafat or his tactics:

The **Democratic Alliance**, a four-group Marxist coalition, is primarily made up of Nayef Hawatmeh's **Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine** and George Habash's **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine**.

The ultra-radical and numerically small **National Alliance** is composed of **Saiqa**, the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command**, the **Popular Struggle Front** and the **Fateh dissidents** (also known as the Abu Musa faction). —R.G.





# SPLINTERING a LEGACY

By Salim Muwakkil

**I**MAM WARITH DEEN MUHAMMAD (NEE Wallace Delaney Muhammad) inherited Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam in 1975 and in a decade changed the group from the black nationalist, quasi-Masonic cult his late father led into the American Muslim Mission, a group professing Islamic orthodoxy. On April 20, 1985, at a Chicago celebration commemorating the 10th anniversary of the entity he created, Muhammad told the assembled faithful that he was no longer their leader.

"This is the last time you'll look upon me as your leader," he said. "I'm not the leader of anybody. I don't accept to be your leader. I'm Imam Muhammad. I don't intend to meet with the Imams as their adviser. You have to advise yourself. Take the Qur'an, take the life of prophet Muhammad, make your decisions. Do not use me as your excuse anymore—I'm not available."

And then the 51-year-old former spiritual leader of about 250,000 African-American Muslims delivered this bombshell: "If you'll follow my advice, you would put down the term 'American Muslim Mission.' You would put it down and never pick up any term that lumps you all together in one community. You would be members of a Muslim community that's international...."

In his now famous April 20 speech, Muhammad explained that although the American Muslim Mission (AMM) will cease to exist as a centralized organization, many of the programs and concerns of the group will continue but will be under the direction of individual *masjids* (Muhammad prefers to use the Arabic word that the French translate as mosques). He was taking this action because, he said, "I've always had a problem in my soul accepting the religion to be organized or institutionalized to the extent that it becomes a corporate entity—a good situation to be exploited by the powerful."

"If you follow the guidance of God; if you have the free, open Islamic society that God intends for you, then you're not an enticement, a temptation, an invitation to the exploiters from the powerful, from the rich.... I'm advising you that if you want to really be an Islamic community, you

should drop these names that separate you from other Islamic populations...."

Muhammad's followers immediately took his advice to stop following him. But when asked what the dissolution of the AMM meant to them, they invariably reply: "There is no such entity as the American Muslim Mission. The term was dropped on April 20, 1985, when Imam W. Deen Muhammad suggested that we stop using this confining term."

There is a defensive tone in their rote reply. Perhaps that should be expected; the fallout from Muhammad's decision has yet to settle and many of his former followers are a bit unsure about what the future holds for them.

"There's been no dissolution of an institution," explains Samuel Ayyub Bilal, a reporter for the group's newspaper and an architect of their collective buying program, a program he insists will continue. "There's only been a dissolution of a containment trap. We are simply not under the rules of one central body, but we're a free and independent part of the worldwide Muslim community. What Imam Muhammad has done is give us true religious freedom," Bilal declares.

## The Farrakhan factor.

In the delayed reaction common to mainstream reporting of news in the black community, Muhammad's move made front page news two weeks later. Coincidentally, Louis Farrakhan, leader of a rival group, was also prominent in the news that day. He had called a news conference in Washington, D.C., to announce receiving a \$5 million, interest-free loan from Libyan leader, Col. Muammar Khadafy. The money, he said, will be used to help finance a series of black-owned businesses. The Black Muslim leader has formed a corporation called People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth (POWER), which, for starters, plans to create a company that will manufacture and distribute household products for black consumers. The Libyan loan will contribute to that effort, he noted.

"It's time to turn some of the \$190 billion purchasing power black people have back into our community to lift our own community up," he said.

Farrakhan, who pledged fealty to Muhammad in 1975 but broke away in 1977 to preach anew the doctrine of Elijah's Na-

tion of Islam (NOI), is following closely in his mentor's footsteps. Elijah himself received a \$3 million loan from Khadafy in 1972 and used the money to purchase an elegant Greek Orthodox church on Chicago's south side and convert it into the NOI's showplace temple.

Elijah Muhammad's program of black self-help is being trumpeted with increasing volume by Farrakhan these days. He now believes the black community is ready for a strong emphasis on economic development after witnessing Jesse Jackson's political quest end in humiliation. Since, in large part, it was Farrakhan's association with Jackson that doomed his electoral ambitions, it could justifiably be argued that the wily Black Muslim simply used the Jackson campaign to set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"I was amazed at how easily Farrakhan used Jesse Jackson," says Lawrence Jones, a former NOI member who remains an interested student of the movement. "I used to think that Jesse was sharp and politically astute, but he created all kinds of unnecessary barriers by embracing so enthusiastically someone like Farrakhan. It makes no sense at all to me why he let himself be undermined so thoroughly," Jones says.

"I think Minister Farrakhan is on the right track," explains Yahya Seifullah, a past official of the old Fruit of Islam who supported W.D. Muhammad when he took over in 1975, serving on his personal security staff, but who later renounced the Imam's leadership. "I think that what Wallace did was very predictable and right in line with his intentions all along. He's wanted, from the very beginning, to destroy what his father built, and, if it wasn't for the dedicated work of Minister Farrakhan and his assistants, Wallace may well have succeeded."

Seifullah also points out that "the COINTELPRO plan of the FBI outlined the very scenario that is now taking place. Now that has to raise some suspicions about what Wallace is up to." He is referring to a memo, revealed through the Freedom of Information Act, that documents FBI speculation about Elijah Muhammad's successor. The memo has favorable references to Wallace D. Muhammad and theorized that if he assumed the leadership of the NOI, he would neutralize the group as a threat.

Seifullah's assessment is shared by

many in the black community. Many black movement activists point to the COINTELPRO document as irrefutable proof of W.D.'s apostasy, and they, like many less politically active members of the black community, regard Muhammad's April 20 announcement as a final, fatal blow to the black institution that once inspired awe and pride, even if few agreed with its doctrine.

"People always looked to the Muslims as a disciplined group of dedicated people who were the black community's last line of defense," Seifullah adds. "And now, with all of these Nazi and Aryan brotherhood groups spreading all over the country, who's looking out for black people's interests. It's good to know that brother Farrakhan is on the case, linking us up with our brothers in other parts of the world. It looks like we may need that unity soon."

Farrakhan's popularity has been on the rise lately, according to the *Washington Post's* Juan Williams, who wrote in a March 18 article, "Black audiences around the nation are cheering and turning out—in increasing numbers and with increasing passion—for Farrakhan. In the past months alone, Farrakhan, whose group...numbers 10,000, has spoken to unusually large crowds in Detroit, Atlanta, Philadelphia and Houston."

## The rebellious heir.

Muhammad's abdication was actually nothing new. He had done essentially the same thing last summer when he resigned as president of the AMM and established a council of Imams to guide the group's activities. But members continued to rely on him as the final arbiter on virtually everything. For example, when Muhammad made a passing remark positive to Michael Jackson, many of his followers suddenly found the singer irresistible; hundreds rushed out and began buying assorted Michael Jackson products.

Temperamentally introverted, Muhammad has never been comfortable with the mantle of leadership he acquired on Feb. 26, 1975. He's been particularly unsettled by the special kind of sycophancy inspired by leadership with a "divine" imprint. But while he may have been discomforted by his unassailable authority, he also exploited it. During the early days of his leadership, Muhammad deliberately cultivated the notion that he was indeed divinely guided and the possessor of special wisdom. He, like his father before him, did little consulting before taking action. He unilaterally decided, for instance, that all African-Americans should be renamed Bilalians, after Bilal, the first African convert to Islam.





Elijah Muhammad (upper left), W. Deen Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan (right). Center photo is of Muhammad and Farrakhan before the split.

"W.D. never really was comfortable with the kind of fanatical adoration some of his followers lavished on him," explains Leonard Sykes, a former editor of the group's newspaper in its *Bilalian News* incarnation. The newspaper later became the *American Muslim Journal* and is now, as of April 20, following the advice of the former leader, the *Muslim Journal*. "But," Sykes adds, "the Imam just couldn't deny that kind of leadership to those thousands who needed and expected to be told they were the recipients of divine favoritism. He knew that if he lost them they would return to their lives of dissipation."

Yet despite the inertia of 40 years of Elijah Muhammad's teachings, W.D. Muhammad, Elijah's seventh child, accomplished amazing things in a surprisingly short period of time. Some have likened him to a mass deprogrammer who has lifted the veil of fanaticism from thousands of acolytes at one time. What was most remarkable about his leadership was that he all but renounced his father's teaching without sparking a revolt. He accomplished this by attributing symbolic rather than literal significance to many of Elijah's more strident or absurd doctrines.

His first order of business was to reveal NOI's financial condition. In the black community the Black Muslims were reputed to be enormously wealthy, but W.D. uncovered the fact that the group was actually \$6 million in the red. Within a year of his ascension, Muhammad dropped the prohibition on allowing whites into the group. And since the core of the NOI's beliefs held that whites are a race of devils created by an evil black scientist who grafted them out of black people, this was a powerful blow to the heart of the movement. W.D. also denounced the paramilitary mentality that flourished in the nation, abolished the Fruit of Islam security unit, and eased the dress code that mandated closely-cropped hair, suits, white shirts and ties for men and colorless long garments and headpieces for women.

*Muhammad Speaks*, the militant NOI newspaper that started in 1959 and set the mold for the scores of underground political newspapers that proliferated in the '60s, was changed into *Bilalian News* and softened considerably. Members of the 80 odd temples around the country were relieved of their obligation to buy at least 300 newspapers a week at 22¢ a copy. (It was assumed they would work harder to sell the papers if their own money was at stake. Many members had cots made of unsold newspapers.) Also, they no longer had to pay weekly "charity" payments, which av-

eraged about \$14. W.D. then changed the name to the World Community of Islam in the West and replaced the group's star and crescent symbol with a depiction of an open Qur'an.

In hindsight, it's easy to trace a unifying theme to all of Muhammad's alterations: he was clearly moving away from the black nationalist ideology and totalitarian operation of the NOI toward a concept of Islam more in accord with that held by the international Islamic community. It is a theme that was discernable in his temperament even before he gained leadership of the organization.

The independent spirit of W.D. Muhammad has long fueled NOI gossip. In 1964, he broke publicly with his father, charging Elijah with flaunting affluence while "the Holy Qur'an warns believers against gathering wealth for personal gain." He accused his father of being a dangerous racist who didn't really care about the welfare of his poor followers. When Malcolm X broke with Elijah in 1964, it was W.D. who became his confidant and Islamic tutor. Though admitted again in late 1966, W.D. was expelled again in 1969 and 1971. He was perpetually at odds with his father.

But the rebellious son of Elijah was tolerated and his transgressions downplayed, because, according to NOI lore, W.D. Muhammad was divinely destined to become the group's next leader. The NOI's originator—known variously as Master Fard Muhammad, Dr. Wallace F. Muhammad, Wallace D. Fard and Allah incarnate, who started teaching the strange doctrine in Detroit in 1930—allegedly designated W.D. the eventual leader of the NOI by writing his name on the wall in the Muhammad house while he was still in the womb of his mother, Clara.

The contentious son was welcomed back into the fold by his father in 1974. His return and rehabilitation was greeted with unusual fanfare. Elijah spoke of him glowingly and he began attracting standing-room-only crowds at regular Thursday ser-

mons he started giving immediately after his return. Although W.D.'s sermons stayed within the confines of the NOI's peculiar catechism, it was obvious to all who heard him that he had something to say that hadn't been said before.

NOI officials began whispering that he was teaching the "new wisdom of the second resurrection," a period that was long awaited and prophesized by Elijah in the '40s. W.D.'s prominence grew as Elijah weakened and the faithful began reading Fard's writing on the wall. When the feeble patriarch died on Feb. 25, 1975, his son and divinely designated heir took over with unanimous approval from the NOI's leadership on that February 26. This added immensely to the already providential nature of his ascension, for February 26 is Savior's Day on the NOI's theological calendar. It is the day God (Fard) was born.

#### "There should be no hostilities."

On Aug. 11, 1983, Muhammad and Farrakhan, alarmed that tensions were heating up among their respective followers, met briefly and issued a terse joint statement that read: "Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, president and leader of the American Muslim Mission, and Minister Louis Farrakhan, National Representative of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam, have met and have come to an agreement. They are concerned that between the followers on both sides there should be no hostilities. Both have a real interest in protecting the image of Muslims and keeping that image in a favorable light. Because of their mutual love for Islam and for the maintenance of peace between their communities, both have agreed to future meetings."

So far, so good. Despite numerous predictions of bloodbaths and holy wars, relations between these two groups have remained remarkably free of violence. Remarkable, because the internal history of the NOI is anything but non-violent. Former FOI troops tell many stories of cruel punish-

ments inflicted on wayward members and non-members who may have criticized Elijah a bit too vigorously. But both groups apparently realize the conflagration that would be ignited by any eruptions of violence between these rival communities.

Farrakhan, however, is not the only "true" heir to Elijah Muhammad's legacy. On the West Coast there is Silas Muhammad, who differs with Farrakhan on the true theological identity of Elijah (i.e., was he Christ or Moses?). On the East Coast, there's Jeremiah Shabazz, who was minister of the NOI's influential Philadelphia Temple No. 12 during Elijah's reign. Shabazz also billed himself as "spiritual adviser" to boxer Muhammad Ali. His interpretation of Elijah's line differs little from Farrakhan and many observers claim the former Philly minister is motivated more by envy than a passion for theological purity. The group splinters into even smaller groups like the Five Percenters, the Death Angels, the New World of Islam and several other exotic-sounding offshoots.

None of these Elijah-inspired "Islams" is considered kosher by the orthodox Islamic world, however. There are heresies contained in NOI beliefs that the international Muslim community would never accept. Chief among them is the concept that God can be manifested as man and that racial identification somehow signifies character. Orthodox Islamic doctrine does not tolerate any material depiction of divinity.

But a new group of African-American Muslims called the National Islamic Assembly is attempting to pick up the pieces of what appears to be a shattering movement. This group is attempting to form a loose, ecumenical confederation of all Islamic-oriented organizations of blacks, including the AMM and the NOI.

"We are Muslims from a variety of backgrounds, affiliations and personal outlooks who share a vision of the meaning and purpose of Islamic life," reads a statement composed during the group's first unity meeting earlier this year. "We have come together to affirm the validity and vitality of progressive Islamic values at a time when many have lost faith that the goals of justice and peace are attainable. We believe society can be improved and that human cooperation can be achieved. We welcome to our cause any Muslim who shares our vision...."

It's surely a vision worth sharing, and if the National Islamic Assembly is successful in its mission, it will be because of an emphasis on tolerance rather than self-righteousness, on unity rather than leadership. It will be because the group is taking the advice of Imam W. Deen Muhammad. ■

## Despite predictions of a bloodbath, relations between the followers of Farrakhan and Muhammad have been free of violence.



## EDITORIAL

# Reagan rehabilitates fascism at Bitburg



President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery, which contained the graves of 49 members of the *Waffen SS*, has been widely seen as a blunder. The administration itself implicitly conceded as much in its statements that Reagan could not back down because he did not want to embarrass his favorite ally and because it might soften his macho image.

But the president's speech at Bitburg gave away a lot more than did the fact of his appearance. It confirmed once again his inability to tell the truth—he neglected to tell his audience that the young girl he quoted in support of his wreath laying actually had asked him not to go there—and it revealed once again his soft spot for fascists, his view that evil resides only in the Evil Empire.

The president's speech writer took a leaf from Eugene V. Debs—"While there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a soul in prison I am not free"—and had Reagan say with a straight face: "I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-Semitism, I am an Afghan, and I am a prisoner in a gulag, I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam, I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a potential victim of totalitarianism."

In short, the president identified with all the alleged victims of totalitarianism that he believes to exist in our world. But somehow he forgot about being a Chilean murdered by Pinochet, or a Filipino tortured by Marcos, or a black deprived of basic human rights in South Africa or a Salvadoran terrorized by the army's death squads.

And Reagan implicitly accepted the view of many former Nazis in Germany who are trying to rehabilitate themselves by reminding us that they were simply premature warriors in the good fight against the wicked empire in the East. In fact, Reagan did not denounce Nazism at Bitburg, only what he called "one man's totalitarian dictatorship." Fascism went unrecognized.

This was entirely consistent with Reagan's general attitudes, and specifically with a revealing remark he made last October, when he was defending his administration's attempts to overthrow the Sandinistas. He then compared Americans joining the *contras* with those who formed the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War, but added that those who went there were, in the opinion of most Americans, fighting on the wrong side.

As usual, the president's facts were

wrong—Gallup Polls taken in 1937 and 1938 showed 65 percent and then 76 percent of Americans supported the Spanish Republic against the fascist forces of Francisco Franco. But Reagan's purpose went beyond the facts. Because the Soviet Union had aided the Republic, while Hitler and Mussolini sent troops to aid Franco, the fascists—in Reagan's mind—became the good guys and the democratically elected Republicans "the wrong side."

Germany's former Nazis understand Reagan only too well. Only hours after he left Bitburg, a few feet from the wreath he placed in front of its chapel, there were wreaths that read: "To the *Waffen SS* who fell at Leningrad" and "For the fallen comrades of the *Waffen SS*." It was more than the German people that Reagan had rehabilitated.

And, indeed, he rehabilitated more than he intended. For, as Marvin Kalb reported, many Germans were expressing the view following Reagan's cemetery visit that "we Germans and Americans had been cooperating very well, until the Jews began to make trouble."

And yet, even in Germany, the Bitburg visit was apparently not as popular as the media would have us believe, or as Helmut Kohl seemed to think. This was brought home with force in the North Rhine-Westphalia state legislative election a week after the event.

Just before the voting, Bernhard Worms, state Christian Democratic leader and Kohl's protege, had proclaimed the election a "referendum over which political forces should represent the new and better Germany." "I am convinced," Worms said, that "it will be those forces that are in favor of reconciliation, in favor of the Western alliance and against pro-Soviet neutralism that will win on the evening of May 12."

But on May 12 Christian Democrats in North Rhine-Westphalia suffered their worst defeat in recent electoral history, losing to the Social Democrats by 36.5 percent to 52.1 percent. In every respect, Reagan's recent European trip was a disaster for the administration. Fortunately, it also seems to have been bad news for his Christian Democratic allies in Germany.

## A triumph of reality over Cold War ideology

*When there is a shock to the system, as there was in Iran or Afghanistan, then we come to the fore, and all of a sudden people begin to stand up and say, "Yeah, we need a strong defense." I have to think it's going to take another one.*

—Adm. James D. Watkins, Chief of Naval Operations, (commenting on the Senate vote to freeze military spending at current levels, plus 4 percent for inflation)

Despite his efforts to create a "shock to the system" in Central America and his continuous efforts to convince the American people that we are facing a threat from an aggressive Soviet empire, popular support for President Reagan's increased defense spending proposals has dropped from 71 percent in 1980 to 9 percent this year, according to a recent Harris survey. That, along with strong popular opposition to further cuts in social spending, have finally led Congress to say no to Reagan on the budget.

The administration's failure to win popular backing for further military escalation is a triumph of reality over ideology. It is an implicit rejection of the arguments of Jeane Kirkpatrick and other administrative ideologues that our present situation is analogous to the one faced by Neville Chamberlain at Munich in 1938, when Hitler was allowed to take the Sudetenland without a fight, thus making World War II inevitable.

That analogy stands or falls on the existence of an aggressively expansionist and militaristic power, which Nazi Germany was, but the Soviet Union is not. And while it is easy for the administration to make their argument—few Democrats will contradict it and appear to be pro-Soviet—the reality of a Soviet Union barely capable of holding on to its immediate sphere of influence, and much more concerned with the growing stagnation of its own society than with expansion is increasingly apparent.

So, too, is the real purpose for the arms buildup, which has been two-fold: first, it is a massive form of pump-priming that does not threaten the ideology of free enterprise, and second, and probably more important, it is a means of enforcing the Reagan policy of neo-colonialism.

The way in which the administration spent the hundreds of millions of dollars

it got for armaments in the past four years gives its ideological arguments away. For despite all the spending little has been accomplished.

As Iowa's Republican Sen. Charles E. Grassley laments, "We may have gotten a little more defense, but for a heck of a lot more money." But waste is in the eye of the beholder. Consider the administration's point of view: all that money went to the largest corporations and made a big difference in the "triumph" of Reaganomics. Is that a waste?

Further, the arms buildup, and especially the billions spent on enlarging the Navy, have had an intimidating effect on the Third World. It is not at all clear that

## Failure to win popular support for further military escalation is an implicit rejection of Reagan's Munich analogy.

naval expansion would make any difference in a war with the Soviet Union—the entire Navy would probably be sunk in half an hour—but a battleship off the coast of Nicaragua or Lebanon is something else again.

Of course, the Democrats never questioned the purpose of the arms buildup. As Rep. Les Aspin (D-WI), and a strong supporter of "strong defense," commented last week: "As far as I know, we never gave 15 minutes' debate to the subject of a 600-ship Navy."

He could have gone further. Congress, in granting 97 percent of the military purchasing power requested by Reagan over the past four years, never gave 15 minutes' debate over the reasons for the requests. That was a taboo subject, and it still is. As usual, opposition to the reactionary policies of the administration is not led by the Democrats. Instead it is forced upon them by popular opinion. ■

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## Wrong target

A MINOR COMPLAINT ABOUT JOHN STORM Roberts' article entitled "White Bread" (*ITT*, May 8). Roberts is an acquaintance of mine, and one for whom I have great admiration, but he has gone after the wrong quarry in attacking "Prairie Home Companion." First, PHC is not a music program per se, and as a general interest radio program with many listeners who tune in despite, not because of, the music, it bears no responsibility to present any particular kind of music other than what it enjoys. Second, although PHC leans to folk, country and bluegrass styles, their track record is excellent in presenting jazz, gospel and blues artists. If PHC declines to go for deeper funk music, it is not only their prerogative, but totally in keeping with the slightly nostalgic, Christian church-oriented, Minnesota-regional Americana that pervades the entire program. Contemporary music of almost every variety is shunned, whether it is heavy metal, disco or rap.

If Roberts wants to accuse PHC of being retrograde, I'd say it was irrelevant, but at least factually correct. PHC is one of the few great shows on American radio today and, although it is non-political in format, it obviously leans left. Let's continue to fight the good fight, but let's not get a superior entertainment like "Prairie Home Companion" caught in the cross-fire.

Gary Kenton  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

## Indifference?

NOTE WITH DISMAY AND CHAGRIN DANIEL Lazare's referring to Elie Wiesel as "either the greatest idiot since Neville Chamberlain" or "morally skewed" (*ITT*, May 8). The editor should be ashamed for permitting such name-calling of an outstanding individual.

Wiesel may be a preacher, but he has earned the moral right to be one. Yes, no person's word or action should be exempt from political criticism. But the tone, the respect with which such criticism is uttered matter. Respect is due such men as King, Brandt and Wiesel, such women as Mother Theresa, who stand as exemplars, as witnesses to a morally responsible humanity.

Assaults such as Lazare's denigrate the stature of such people, and teach indifference to the example they have set. Thought and action are dampened by such indifference.

Horst Brand  
Bethesda, Md.

## Fellow fascists

DANIEL LAZARE'S EXCELLENT "REMEMBERING THE DAYS OF FASHIONABLE FASCISM" (*ITT*, May 8) sheds light on what has for too long been a dirty little secret: namely, that Western conservatives served as apologists and fellow travellers for fascism during the '20s and '30s. There are but a handful of books on this unsavory subject.

I recommend W.A. Swanberg's *Luce and His Empire*, which details the extent to which the Time-Life press flamboyantly defended Mussolini, Hitler and Franco. The Munich Pact was openly praised by *Time*, and much was made of the fact that Communists were the chief opposition to the pact. In a speech before the Scranton Chamber of Commerce in 1934, Henry Luce said, "The moral force of fascism, appearing in totally different forms in different nations, may be the inspiration for the next general march of mankind."

That is a history that has been well buried in the Orwellian memory hole!

Gene H. Bell-Villada  
Williamsburg, Mass.

## Affinities

MANY THANKS FOR THE EXCELLENT piece by Daniel Lazare on "fashion-

able fascism" (*ITT*, May 8). We need to recall past affinities of anti-communism in the business community and among its witting and unwitting ideologues with fascism. I would like to see more on how Mussolini and Hitler gained such widespread support from their own populations. We must learn why fascists triumphed and why the left lost in the '30s.

Samuel Weiss  
Chicago

## Inadequate

THE TWO ARTICLES MENTIONING Reagan's plan to visit the Nazi cemetery at Bitburg and the controversy surrounding it both contain serious inadequacies.

Alex Amerisov's article on World War II was obviously influenced by his Soviet education. While focusing on the contributions and suffering of the Soviet people, he ignores the incongruities. Further, like many official Soviet texts, he fails to mention the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression pact (1939-41) that also formed part of the background of the invasion of Poland and the beginnings of the holocaust.

He mentions fairly the huge losses of Soviet Jews and others, while not ignoring the role of pro-Nazi collaborators. His final paragraph implies some special role for the Red Army in ending the concentration camps. A more honest reading of the history of the holocaust shows that none of the major allies—the U.S., U.K. or USSR—put saving Jews at a very high priority. None of them bombed the death camps. At times they saved some Jews, at times they put obstacles in the way of their rescue, and they most often ignored them, leaving them to be killed.

Ending the holocaust played no role in U.S. or Soviet war planning. Front-line soldiers, genuinely shocked, were kind to the few survivors. Those who had the strength were probably glad to meet their liberators, whether Soviet troops at Maidanek, British at Bergen-Belsen or Americans at Dachau. This very literal rescue of survivors and subsequent acts of good will should not be confused with deliberate plans by any allied country.

Also, Daniel Lazare's accusation—in his otherwise excellent article on fascism's former popularity in America—while Elie Wiesel probably needs no defense, that Elie Wiesel is "either the greatest idiot since Neville Chamberlain or... morally skewed" is as painful as it is untrue.

Elie Wiesel has been a voice for morality in a world of real-politick. He went to Cambodia to be with victims of a murderous regime. This year he went to South Africa, and despite urgings from South African Jews and non-Jews not to condemn apartheid, he did so strongly there and on his return. Finally, he questioned the moral judgment of the president of the United States publicly and face to face.

No person is above criticism. But there are surely many better examples of lack of moral judgment.

Rabbi Robert Tabak  
Henrietta, N.Y.

*Daniel Lazare replies: I stand by my description. Elie Wiesel was so full of praise for the president last month that for a moment I thought he was addressing the ghost of Eleanor Roosevelt. Reagan, he*

# LETTERS

*In These Times* is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

declared, was "always on the side of justice, against the SS and against what they represent." Not only that, but the U.S. is "the moral nation, the authority in the world."

For the record, Reagan is rarely on the side of justice, nor is he always against what the Nazi SS represents. As Reagan made clear last October, the royalists in the Spanish Civil War were "the wrong side," and therefore we can assume he looks upon Franco and his fascists as the forces of right. That places Reagan on the same side as Hitler's Condor Legion, the bombing of Guernica and, presumably, the SS.

## Drivel

AUTHORS OF SERIOUS COMMENTARY ON current social and political conditions ought to be heartened with the appearance of John Storm Roberts' article about the music on "Prairie Home Companion" (*ITT*, May 14). If editor Pat Aufderheide has time for such drivel, she may find time for consideration of their efforts.

Charles R. Denton  
Manchester, N.H.

## Elemental

TANI BARLOW AND DONALD LOWE'S PERSPECTIVES article, "In China, kin position outweighs gender" (*ITT*, April 10) distorts the world-views of many American feminists and patronizes Chinese women.

First, they identify the bourgeois women's movement in the U.S. as the feminist movement. They disregard the many politically active socialist-feminists who do not share an "essentialist" definition of woman—that women share the same perceptions across time, culture and class. For example, the Reproductive Rights National Network (R2N2), while participating in pro-choice campaigns with bourgeois feminists who are concerned solely with legalized abortion, also works to shape the consciousness of that movement to recognize that non-white, non-Anglo, working-class women need a political movement that will protect their ability to have children.

In addition, Barlow and Lowe refer to the lack of a viable feminist movement in China, without observing that one such—strong, autonomous and politically sophisticated—did exist in the '20s. It was brutally suppressed by Chiang-Kai-Shek, aided by the collaboration of the Maoist movement which had joined him in a popular front.

It is neither ethnocentric nor anti-proletarian to suspect that there are less brutal ways to solve problems of scarce resources than by (1) forcefully limiting to one the number of children permitted to Chinese parents (which has stimulated

widespread female infanticide); (2) requiring women to report their menstrual periods to their neighborhood or workplace birth control committee, and (3) denying to women (and men, even more so) the right to experience and define sexuality for themselves, even when that leads to homosexual relationships.

Most important, many socialist-feminists in the U.S. do not accept the claim that the Maoist revolution was a socialist revolution, because they believe that elemental working-class democracy is the heart of socialism. The struggle for socialism of the Chinese people, as with all people, can never be won by artificially subordinating the consciousness of one form of oppression to that of another. As is tragically demonstrated in China, the counterposing of consciousness of class oppression to gender, familial and other forms of oppression results only in the continuation of both forms. As Western socialist-feminists have learned through painful experience, these struggles must always be linked and never counterposed.

Barlow and Lowe's contention that gender concerns are alien to Chinese women would be more believable if Chinese women were allowed free access to the ideas and lessons learned in the struggles of Western socialist-feminists.

Beth Bush  
Pennington, N.J.

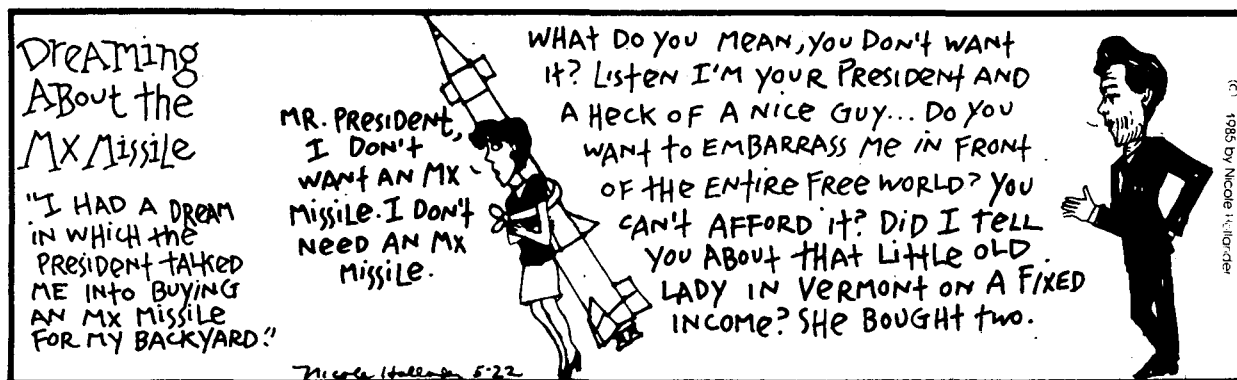
*Barlow and Lowe reply: Beth Bush's example of R2N2 points to the necessity of affinity politics in advanced capitalist U.S.A., where struggle for reproductive rights is a key issue in body politics. However, we doubt this is an appropriate model for the politics of socialist reconstruction in developing China.*

*At this stage of their unique history, Chinese women mostly want not sexual freedom, but freedom from sexual harassment. Chinese women intellectuals want divorce rights and the prospect of non-marriage. Chinese women workers want longer paid maternity leaves and application of the principle of equal pay for the sexes. And some Chinese peasant women see the single-child family as a means of relief from the pressures of husbands and in-laws to bear more children.*

*We are arguing for coalition, affinity politics in the multinational world capitalist system. Affinity politics recognizes diversities and multi-centers. It does not help to fall back on such Western clichés as "elemental working-class democracy is the heart of socialism" thus denying the historical significance of the Chinese Revolution, or "Chinese women [be] allowed free access to the ideas and lessons learned in the struggle of Western socialist-feminists," as though Chinese women will never know what they want without lessons from the West.*

## SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





## PERSPECTIVES

# Released apartheid foe attacks Israel's ties to South Africa

By Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi

**I**T TOOK DENNIS GOLDBERG, the ANC leader released from South African prison in March and flown to Israel, an ungracious guest if there ever was one, to remind Israelis and the whole world again of the grand alliance between Israel and South Africa and its significance.

But even without the ungrateful behavior, of a visitor reminding his hosts of the skeleton in their closet, the story refuses to go away—because the skeleton is alive and kicking, and its tracks can be found all over the place. The story of Dennis Goldberg, the way he was released from prison and his stay in Israel is an interesting footnote in the annals of Israeli-South African friendship, and is worth looking into.

Officially, he was released after the South African government offered to commute the sentences of all African National Congress (ANC) prisoners, if they disavowed violence as a way of struggle, and signed statements to that effect. According to the South African government, 22 inmates have agreed and have been released, but only one name was published—that of Goldberg. What was the real story behind his release, and why was he getting all this publicity?

Goldberg, who was sentenced in 1964

to life imprisonment for his part in guerrilla operations led by the ANC, did sign a statement renouncing violence. This was a major gain for the South African government in its efforts to divide the ANC, the most serious threat to apartheid today. This move helped the South African government drive a wedge between whites and blacks in the anti-apartheid movement. Of the 12 ANC leaders arrested in 1964, only the seven blacks are still in prison. The five whites are free; one was discharged, another was acquitted and two escaped before the trial began. One of the escapees, Arthur Goldreich, now lives in Israel, while the other, Harry Wolpe, lives in England.

A wedge was also driven between Communists and non-Communists in the anti-apartheid struggle, as Goldberg was a member of the South African Communist Party. And a third was driven between Jews and non-Jews working together against apartheid.

Despite this, and the inevitable bitterness in the ANC, Goldberg showed the world that he had lost none of his fighting spirit. In media interviews while he was in Israel—he has since gone to London—he spoke about the circumstances of his release, about apartheid and about relations between Israel and South Africa, all of which caused his hosts much discomfort.

As it turns out, the release came not only as part of the South African amnesty

program, but also as a result of intercessions by Israeli officials, including the president of Israel, and through the effort of an Israeli kibbutz member long active in prisoner release and rehabilitation. Herut Lapid is a member of kibbutz Ayelet-Hashahar, which is near kibbutz Ma'ayan-Baruch, where Hillary Goldberg, Dennis' daughter, lives. He has been active for years in rehabilitating prisoners through a program that places them in kibbutzim while they are on parole.

Another one of his activities has been to secure the release of Israeli criminals who have had the bad luck of being in foreign prisons. He has been involved in several cases where such criminals, from heroin smugglers to bank robbers, have won pardons and paroles from foreign governments. Because of his expertise in such matters, Lapid was approached by Hillary Goldberg and asked to persuade her father to accept the South African amnesty offer. Lapid was successful in his mission, which he regarded as purely humanitarian, but his role was eventually criticized by the released Goldberg, who undoubtedly resented being put in the category of those needing rehabilitation. Not stopping at criticizing those directly involved in his release, Goldberg went on to call for a total economic boycott of South Africa, and to point to Israel as a major ally of the apartheid regime.

Goldberg's comments enraged some Israelis even further, and brought about a call for his deportation only one week after he entered the country. Specifically, in an interview he emphasized the similarities between the Palestinian struggle and the black struggle in South Africa. While this analogy has undoubtedly occurred to quite a few Israelis, his readiness to advocate terrorism as a means of political struggle caused Geula Cohen, a right-wing Knesset member, to ask that Goldberg be deported. There was no need for that, however, since Goldberg announced on his arrival that he would never stay in a country that is a major supporter of South African apartheid.

Even though Goldberg spent most of his 7,904 days in prison in isolation, and started receiving newspapers only in 1980, he was well aware of the Israeli alliance with South Africa. Those of us who are not in total isolation and who read the *New York Times* every day should be at least as well informed. Any discussion of this alliance in the U.S. is immediately drowned by the Greek chorus organized by the Bnai-Brith Anti-Defamation League, which keeps reminding us that the whole world is doing business

with South Africa, including black Africa and Arab countries. This is true and obvious, but it is also a red herring having nothing to do with the alliance between Israel and South Africa, which is not expressed through trade but through activities tied to what apartheid is all about. Many countries do business with South Africa, but few send military advisers to help the struggling apartheid regime as Israel does. The close relationship between South Africa and Israel expresses itself in so many ways, and is evident in so many forms, that just a few items will be mentioned here.

• Yitzhak Rabin, currently Israel's defense minister, said in April 1976, when he was prime minister, that South Africa and Israel shared the same ideals. How many other prime ministers have said that?

• The Histadrut, Israel's large labor union, which also owns several large corporations, has a near-monopoly on trade with South Africa, through the Koor cor-

*Dennis Goldberg, an ungracious guest, criticizes the very special military and industrial relationship between Israel and South Africa's apartheid regime.*

poration, which is owned by the Workers Holding Company. Are there labor unions in other countries doing that?

• Israel is the only foreign country to have considerable investments in the four Bantustan states created by South Africa to contain its black population. Among Israeli businessmen investing in the bantustans are two former finance ministers, Yigal Hurvitz (currently minister without portfolio) and Yoram Aridor (currently member of the Knesset).

• The electronic fencing on South Africa's borders designed to prevent penetration by black guerrillas was built and is being maintained by Israeli experts.

• The Merkava tank, known to television viewers all over the world as a result of the Lebanon War, and proudly presented as an original Israeli achievement, is actually the product of a joint Israeli-South African development project and will be the standard tank in both the Israel Defense Forces and the South African Defense Forces.

• The joint Israeli-South African nuclear program has been reported on by sources in both countries. Israel has also supplied South Africa with Jericho missiles, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

• The Lavi jet, another major Israeli achievement is also an Israeli-South African joint production. The two air forces have been training together for at least 10 years, as have the two navies.

We should be grateful to Israel's able and willing defenders in the U.S. for reminding us how many countries in the world support the survival of apartheid in various ways, but, as the items above show, Israel's alliance with South Africa is unique and is expressed through contacts that no other country in the world has with the apartheid system. That is why the story is not likely to go away, but—as the struggle against apartheid is intensified—will probably get more and more well-deserved attention.

*Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi is an editor of the Israeli monthly New Outlook and is writing a book on Israel and the Third World.*

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the snow is gone...



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By Lawrence Weschler

**H**AVE YOU NO SENSE of decency, sir?" counsel Joseph Welch shoots back in that great primordial kinescope of our common memories. "Have you left no sense of decency?" he repeated, having cornered Sen. Joseph McCarthy in a particularly glaring lapse at the climax of the Army-McCarthy hearings in June 1954. "If it were in my power to forgive you for your reckless cruelty, sir, I would do so, but your forgiveness will have to come from Someone other than me."

And with that exquisite thrust and parry—or so the story goes, the story we tell ourselves about our common past—Welch the Dragon-Slayer polished off the Beast of McCarthyism once and for all. Today, if you mention McCarthyism, it's generally thought that you're referring to a particular historic moment, a weird phase, an aberration, a seizure of inquisitorial mania that overwhelmed our country for a few brief years during the late '40s and early '50s, destroyed a few careers, perpetrated a certain amount of injustice, but was eventually superseded, is over, is *long gone*.

And yet, looked at more carefully, the entire 40-year history of post-war America—or certainly post-war American foreign policy—can be seen to have been dominated by the spirit of McCarthy, to have transpired under the sign of McCarthyism. It's not just that certain

Vietnam? That question in turn came to dominate the foreign policies of Johnson and Ford. Long after the premises of the McCarthyite world view had been decisively disproven (there was no Monolithic Communist Conspiracy, what we were instead witnessing were extraordinarily complex dramas of post-colonial transformation in extremely poor regions throughout the Third World), the implicit threat of a new revival of McCarthy's damning question continued to determine the behavior of his successors, as if by magic—and particularly the behavior of the so-called moderates who had initially appeared to have triumphed over him.

McCarthyism persists not only in haunting our perspective of the present situation but also in skewing our vision of the history that brought us to this present. During the last several months, with the uncanny conjunction of the observances around both the 40th anniversary of the fall of Berlin and the 10th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, the McCarthyite tenor seemed robustly alive amongst us.

The fact that Berlin actually fell to the Soviets, that the Soviets were our *allies* and as such bore the brunt of most of the fighting in the war, is virtually ignored, or at best downplayed. World War II is recast as a war of Freedom against World Totalitarianism, and Yalta is recast as the betrayal of that great crusade's true purpose.

The Nazis turn out to have been little more than incidental bit players in this reinterpretation. It's almost as if the Allied landing at Normandy established a beachhead in the battle against the Soviets, and that the American armies had to rush across Europe, fighting off those pesky Germans, in order to get to the real enemy, the Soviets; only that at the last moment, the decisive battle, which we could easily have won, was called off.

No wonder the Nazis can now be dismissed as "victims" like any other: the (West) Germans need to be reclaimed and purified for the more fundamental battle against the Soviets. (During the McCarthy era, many European emigrés living in this country suddenly found themselves being hounded—and this was the official charge, the term used in their dossiers—for having been "premature antifascists," by which was meant that they'd opposed Hitler too actively too soon back in the days when all he was doing was ridding Germany of Communists: "premature anti-fascism" translated into "inappropriate pro-communism.")

Today we are witnessing a variation on that theme: the Nazis are in a certain sense being rehabilitated for having, after all, fought a war against the Soviets—the war we should have fought but failed to.) The history of our involvement in Vietnam is similarly being recast. To begin with, we are hearing rumors that the war could have been won after all, in fact that the war was won, and that it was only the peace that was lost due to fuzzy-headed civilian interference back home.

Never mind that, contrary to McCarthyite dogma, the collapse of Vietnam did not prove the first in an inexorable chain of falling dominos (that, on the contrary, most of Southeast Asia remains vigorously capitalist to this day) or that, contrary to every McCarthyite tenet, Hanoi's victory never resulted in the long-predicted bloodbath of political opponents. The facts can be messaged, reality accommodated. Hanoi, after all, *did* invade Cambodia, thereby showing its true imperialist colors, and in some vague way Hanoi can be held responsible for the bloodbath that occurred in that godforsaken country.

The trouble with this new interpretation, however, is that it was *we* who brought the war to Cambodia through our secret saturation bombings and thereby destabilized the country so badly that Pol Pot's previously utterly marginal guerrilla movement, the Khmer Rouge, could sweep to power and wreak its terrible carnage, and that one of the main reasons Hanoi invaded Cambodia was to put a

# PERSPECTIVES

stop to that very holocaust. Another problem with the new revisionist interpretation is that today, owing to incredibly convoluted reasons of *realpolitik*, the perpetrators of the holocaust, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge, are *our* allies in opposing the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. It's a terrible mess, in part caused by our reliance on a McCarthyite perspective, one that cannot be set to right by further viewing it through McCarthyite spectacles.

## Our new "loss."

McCarthy haunts us today both retrospectively (Who lost the *real* Second World? Who lost Cuba? Who lost Vietnam?), but even more so prospectively (Who is going to get the blame for losing Nicaragua?). We don't seem able to shake it, this eerie, obsessive, terribly destructive impulse to see the world in McCarthyite terms.

For a brief moment, a couple weeks back, the House of Representatives, by the slimmest of margins, voted in effect

ever he pleases, the fact that Ortega's trip had been scheduled already for two and a half months before his departure, the fact that the economic debacle in Nicaragua—which was partly responsible for sending Ortega to Moscow with his hat in hand—was largely the result of extreme American pressures (the cut-off of aid, blockade of international loans, and so forth)—all this was momentarily forgotten.

My God, the man had up and gone to Moscow—the gall! Granted, Ortega's media advisors were fools to have allowed him to continue with his travel plans at precisely that moment (they ought to be forced to hold a colloquium with the people who handled imagery for President Reagan's recent Bitburg visit).

Still, one might wish for a bit more historical perspective on the part of our representatives. What if, instead, Ortega had routed his Moscow junket by way of Washington, D.C.—a 12-hour layover, perhaps—if he'd gone to Congress and

## Who lost Cuba? or rather, who was to be blamed for "losing" it? That anxiety set the parameters for too much of our foreign policy.

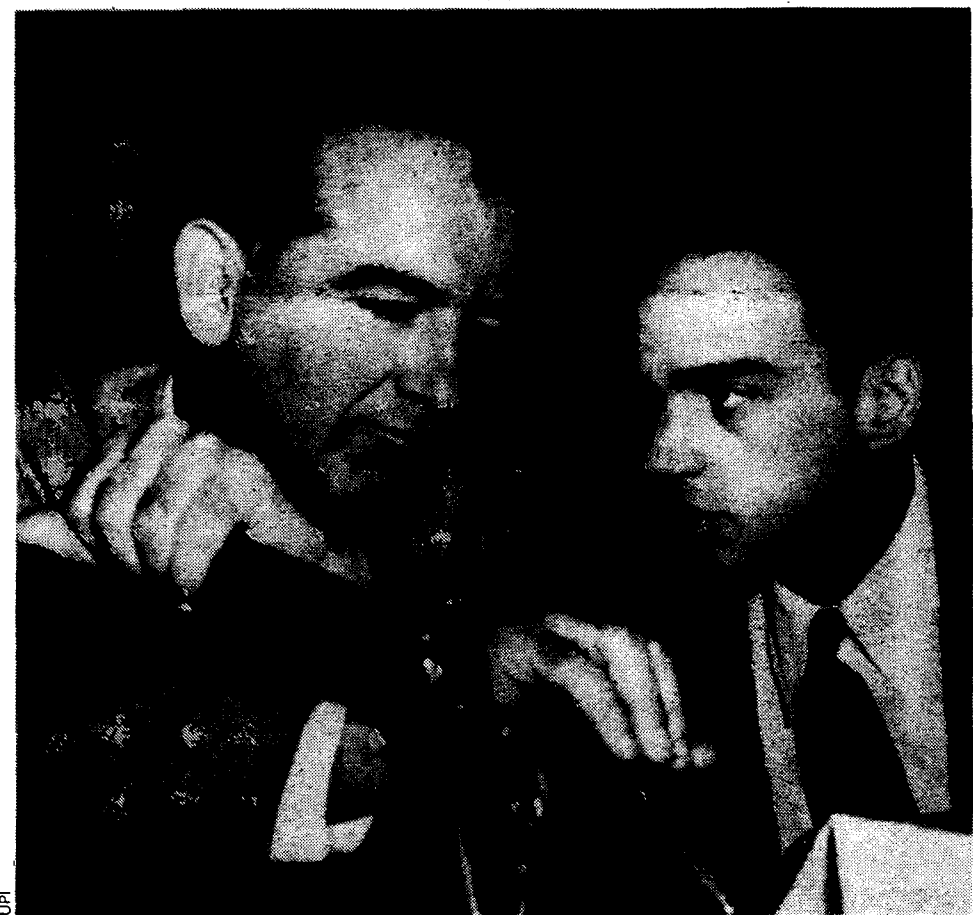
strains of the McCarthyite ideology recur from time to time, to a greater or lesser extent, so that one might say, "As a nation we are more McCarthyite today than we were six months ago but not as much as we were 30 years ago." No, it's that the concerns of the McCarthy era have set the principal agenda for much of our foreign policy ever since, and in such an absolutely definitive way that today, long after the discreditation of McCarthy, his ideology and his methods, we still define our challenges as a nation facing other nations in his Mannichean terms, and those terms virtually alone.

## The lost country syndrome.

"Who lost China?" That was the shrill accusatory question that characterized the McCarthyite hysteria in its purest essence, as if China had been ours to lose, as if we had somehow lost it to a single, unified, monolithic World Communist Conspiracy through the hapless bungling, or worse, the intentional conniving of a small secret cabal of traitors nestled deep in our own ranks. McCarthy was eventually discredited, the supposedly united front of Red China and Red Russia disintegrated before our eyes into one of the most virulent antipathies anywhere in the world, and yet the question, or at any rate the underlying tenor of the question, persisted, through myriad protean variations, haunting, defining the American political landscape ever since.

"Who lost Cuba?" Or rather, who was going to be held accountable for losing Cuba? In many ways that obsessive question, that anxiety, set the parameters for much of Kennedy's foreign policy.

Who would get the blame for losing



"Who lost China?" was a question that characterized the hysteria of the McCarthy era.

not to view Nicaragua in terms of the old McCarthyite model, not to let itself be swayed by anxieties of future retributive blame. The representatives voted down a package that would have continued American aid, even though only of a "humanitarian" sort, to the *contras* currently fighting to overthrow the sovereign government of Nicaragua.

But then that government's president, Daniel Ortega, embarked on a trip to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to seek assistance for his country's desperately strapped economy, and the jig was up. All the old models returned, and with a vengeance. President Reagan announced a trade embargo, and moderate Democrats fell all over themselves to climb aboard with their endorsements of the punitive scheme. "Ortega's visit to Moscow struck a nerve," Congressman Bill Alexander (D-AR) told the *New York Times*. "There's a huge anger at Ortega," New York Democrat Charles Schumer concurred. "People regard his trip as a personal rebuke to Congress."

The fact that Ortega heads a sovereign government and has the right to go where

pleaded for the \$200 million his country so desperately needs from them; if he'd gone to the White House and stood outside the iron gates, pleading for an audience with the president, the way Grenada's Maurice Bishop did in the months before his assassination?

Does anybody seriously believe Ortega would have had any more luck than Maurice Bishop? Does anybody believe President Reagan would have allowed a sudden reversal of his policy of isolating and slowly strangling the Sandinista regime? Well, if not, does anyone have any other suggestions for a leader who needs to feed his people today, immediately? And if not, what's the fuss? What's the sudden revelation?

In fact, there's no new revelation at all. It's the same old story—American politicians terrified of being blamed for "the loss" of some distant patch of jungle that was never rightfully theirs to lose in the first place. It's as if Joseph Welch had never existed.

Lawrence Weschler, whose books include *The Passion of Poland*, is a staff writer with the *New Yorker*.



**Mikhail Bakhtin**By Katerina Clark and Michael  
"Holquist"Harvard University Press,  
398 pp., \$25.00By **Burton Hatlen**

**S**OVIET AND WESTERN forms of paranoia have made the political and cultural regions beyond the "Iron Curtain" profoundly mysterious to almost all Americans. At one time Americans at least read the classic Russian novels, and even an occasional Soviet novel—Mikhail Sholokhov or Alexei Tolstoy. But now, for most people under 40, even *War and Peace* and *The Brothers Karamazov* seem to have joined the ranks of those long books you always intend to read but never get around to.

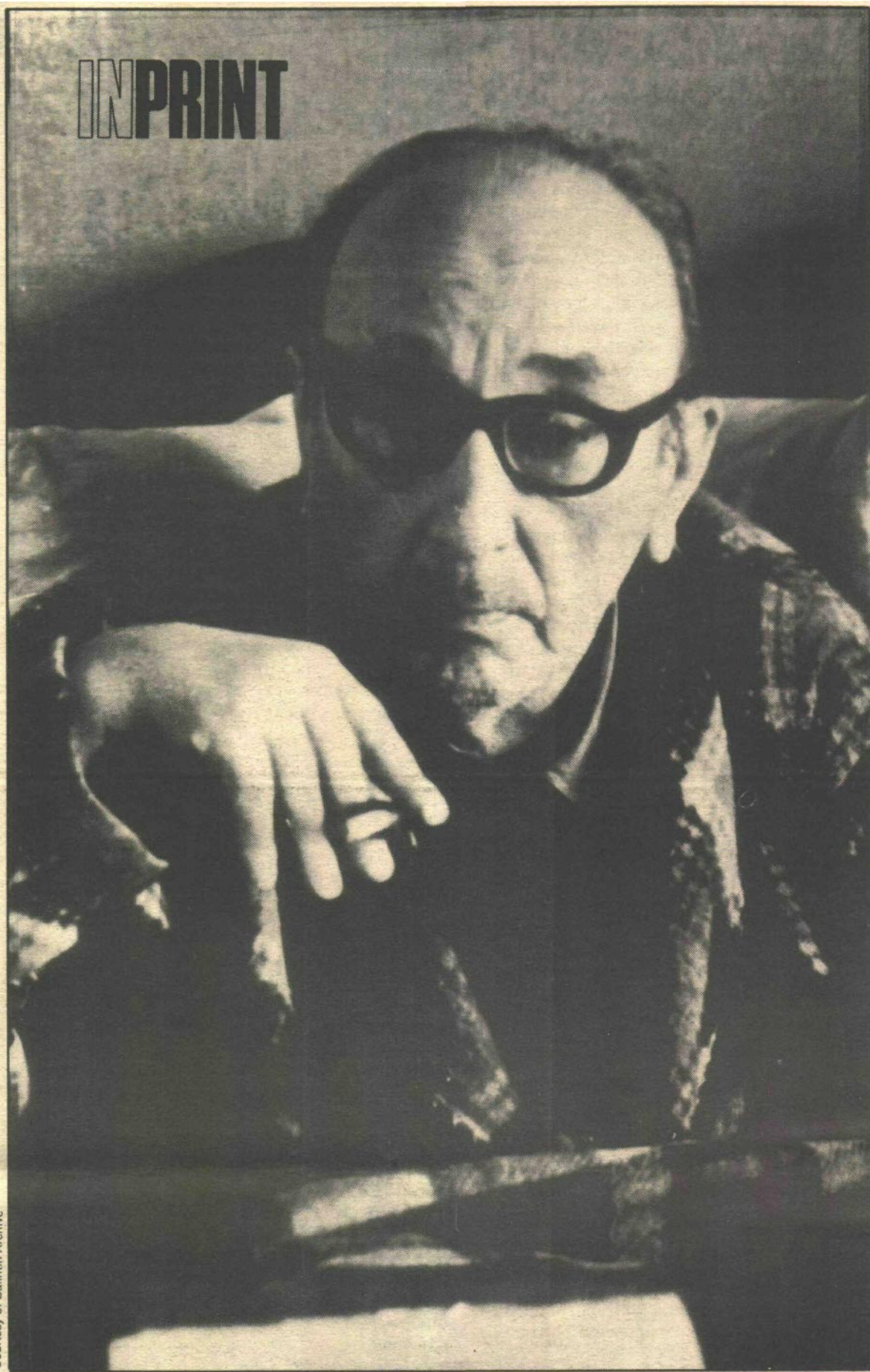
So the cultural distance between West and East is greater today even than it was in the '50s. From time to time a message gets through—but we have all been trained to read the writings of Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn as exposés of Soviet society, so that *Doctor Zhivago* and *Cancer Ward* have actually diminished rather than increased possibilities for cross-cultural dialog.

This appears to be the fate also of M.M. Bakhtin, a Soviet literary and cultural theorist who over the last 20 years has established himself as a major presence within modern Western culture. Bakhtin's emergence began in 1968, with the publication in translation of his longest work, *Rabelais and His World*. This was followed by the publication in 1973 of translations both of *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and of two books originally ascribed to V.N. Voloshinov but now recognized as by Bakhtin, *Freudianism: a Marxist Critique* and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.

Within the last five years, it has become clear that Bakhtin has, unequivocally, arrived. Some signs of this are the 1981 publication of *The Dialogic Imagination*, four long essays on the novel; the publication, also in 1981, of a study of Bakhtin by Tzvetan Todorov; the 1983 publication of a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* devoted to Bakhtin; the imminent publication of two volumes of Bakhtin's earlier writings and a rash of panels and papers at MLA conventions devoted to "dialogic" or "Bakhtinian" approaches. And, now, this solidly researched critical biography.

This is an almost unprecedented phenomenon—a Soviet scholar who has become a major influence on linguistics and literary studies in the U.S. It is not entirely unprecedented, however, for Russian Formalism gave birth to Structuralism, which in the '60s and early '70s was an important influence on American linguistic and cultural studies. Formalism came West in the person of Roman Jakobson. Bakhtin, whose scholarship is as formidable as Jakobson's and whose vision of language and culture offers a clear alternative to Structuralism, chose to stay in the Soviet Union.

Like almost everyone from the Soviet Union that we hear about in the West, Bakhtin suffered his share of abuse from the Soviet system. He spent time in prison and a longer period in internal exile. Some of his books remained un-



Mikhail Bakhtin is a major 20th-century Russian thinker influential in the West, who is in no apparent way "anti-Soviet" or dissident.

## BIOGRAPHY

## West meets East with Mikhail Bakhtin's work

published for decades and he won no Lenin prizes. But Bakhtin didn't leave, and he survived, even thrived. He thrived most vigorously in the lively cultural world of Leningrad in the late '20s, where in a space of six years he completed major critical works on linguistics, Freud, Dostoevsky and "the formal method in literary study."

But during the 40-year period that he subsequently spent in the provinces, Bakhtin extended and deepened his thinking on a cluster of themes that he made his own. And he did so as a respected Soviet citizen; for many years he was a popular teacher of world literature at a Pedagogical Institute (more or less the equivalent of an American state college) at Saransk. Today Bakhtin's books are readily available in the Soviet Union. So here is a major 20th-century Russian thinker, increasingly influential in the West, but in no apparent way



*Here is a Soviet scholar who has become a major influence on literary studies in the U.S.*

"anti-Soviet," nor even a "dissident."

### Our common life.

What are we to make of this phenomenon? To begin with, it is important to recognize that all of Bakhtin's work turns on one central issue: community, our *common* life. Thus Bakhtin criticizes Freud for failing to recognize the degree to which the self is a function of social processes—and thereby he arrives at a conception of the relationship of self and society that parallels the "interpersonal" theory of psychiatry developed by Harry Stack Sullivan, who also started with a critique of Freud. Bakhtin's great book on Rabelais centers on the theme of "carnival"—the ways in which the biological energies of people break down the barriers between individuals and in the process also subvert all social hierarchies, thereby opening up (if only temporarily and symbolically) a communal space of freedom and equality even within the most rigidly authoritarian social structure.

Most significantly, Bakhtin's stress on the primacy of the "we" takes the form of a conception of language as first of all dialog, a medium in which the self comes to awareness of itself as existing in relationship to the "other," and through which the self reaches out to that "other"—that alone can, in the free unfolding of unconstrained dialog, provide the self a ground upon which to say "I am." "You address me, and I reply; therefore, I am." Such is Bakhtin's alternative to the splendid solipsism of the Cartesian "I."

His theory of language combined with the sense of carnival shaped Bakhtin's view of the novel as the supremely dialogic art form, and thus as a concrete promise of a world in which all people would be free to speak without constraint.

Bakhtin is an attractive figure to many Westerners precisely because he offers a fully articulated alternative to the individualistic habits of thought characteristic of our culture. Some years ago a student of mine said, "But there has to be an I before there can be a we." I realized that in fact I assume that the "we" *does* precede the "I"—and that the official ideology of American culture presumes the primacy of the "I" over the "we." To some in the West, Bakhtin has seemed a truly prophetic voice precisely because of his insistence on the primacy of the "we."

Furthermore, Bakhtin's thinking offers a way beyond the sterile dichotomy of "individual freedom" versus "collective tyranny"—an opposition that has made the very idea that we share a life "in common" suspect in the West. Bakhtin allows us to imagine the possibility of a freedom within a community, and to see the community as the necessary condition of freedom.

Some thinkers in the West have affirmed the primacy of the social over the individual, and have seen dialog as central to human experience: such as Martin Buber, George Herbert Meade and John Dewey. But Bakhtin refines his thinking in direct engagement with certain thinkers and traditions—Sigmund Freud, Ferdinand Saussure, Structuralism—that have in recent years eclipsed Dewey and company. Bakhtin offers a way beyond the various biological, linguistic and cultural prison houses postulated by most recently fashionable "isms."



How is it that one of the most compelling visions of freedom now available to us should have come, not from the part of the world that likes to call itself "free," but rather from the heart of the "evil empire," a region that "liberals" and even "socialists" often see as void of any intellectual or artistic vitality? Clark and Holquist argue that Bakhtin's thought owes nothing at all to Marxism or to the cultural life of the Soviet Union. Rather they see him as working within the tradition of Russian Orthodox Christianity.

In pursuing this thesis Clark and Holquist recount at length the histories of various groups that in the early years of the Russian revolution tried "to link religion and revolution, Communism and Christ." They demonstrate that Bakhtin was associated with several members of these groups. But Clark and Holquist also ask us to believe that the evidence they present of Bakhtin's religious concerns proves that his "Marxism" was merely a smoke screen. This proposition is dubious. Bakhtin was not, the authors of this book ask us to believe, a Marxist at all. Clark and Holquist never quite declare Bakhtin an anti-Marxist, but they do call him a "non-Marxist." They argue that Bakhtin used Marxist categories of analysis only because they fortuitously coincide with his own presumably religious concerns, rather than because he was in any meaningful sense of that term a Marxist.

There is something a bit deviant—or at least perverse—here. Clark and Holquist concede that Bakhtin's thought is grounded on two fundamental premises: "the impossibility of conceiving individuals in isolation" and "the primacy of social conditions...in shaping consciousness." Further, Bakhtin also devotes considerable attention to the theme of class struggle, both in the Rabelais book and in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, where he sees linguistic history as a record of class struggle.

There is another way of looking at Bakhtin, quite different from this picture of "Bakhtin as Russian Orthodox religious thinker." Assume, for example, that *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* is precisely what it purports to be: an attempt to extend Marxist modes of analysis into a new area, linguistics. Admittedly, Bakhtin's views on language are very different from the linguistic theories that Stalin later promulgated, and that became for a considerable period the foundation of Soviet linguistics.

Yet to assume, therefore, that Bakhtin's theories "aren't Marxist" would be naive, for in fact his theories are much more Marxist—more dialectical, more insistent on seeing all cultural phenomena as ground in social interaction—than Stalin's. Bakhtin's linguistic theories are the closest thing to a dialectical materialist conception of language. More generally, Bakhtin offers, I believe, the most satisfactory Marxist theory of culture available. But to understand fully the power of Bakhtin's work one must examine how he adapts and extends Marxist principles—and this is precisely what Holquist and Clark are unable or unwilling to do.

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## HISTORY

# Hard-won fight for free speech

### Emergence of a Free Press

By Leonard W. Levy  
Oxford University Press,  
383 pp., \$29.95

By David Kairys

FOR A COUNTRY THAT boasts so much about our freedom and our bill of rights, we say surprisingly little about the history of either. Perhaps this is because when we look carefully, many do not like what they see.

In 1960 Leonard Levy's *Legacy of Suppression* shook the foundations of the free world by suggesting that the framers of the American Constitution, as well as the general public during the late 1700s, did not believe that the Constitution guaranteed, or should guarantee, such basics of free speech as the right to criticize the government or government officials without being sent to jail. Worse, he had the audacity to document his conclusions with the words and writings of our leading lights of liberty—Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Peter Zenger, even Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine.

While considered heresy at the time, Levy's conclusions were most disturbing because they were clearly true. Many scholars tried to attack the details, but the essence of Levy's message was and is unscathed: the Constitution was essentially meant to adopt the existing English common law on expression (which was quite repressive). Our country was not

founded or based on freedom of speech, and if one seeks historical (or rhetorical) support for freedom of speech as we understand it today, the "founding fathers," the debates at the Constitutional Convention and the Constitution itself are not much help. The framers of the Constitution, and probably most people during that time, as Levy concludes, "assumed that truth was one-sided and that freedom should be available only to believers."

*Emergence of a Free Press* is an expanded and somewhat revised version of Levy's earlier book. It traces, in an enjoyable though still scholarly fashion, the chronological development in early America of ideas and legal theories about free speech.

### Basic legal theories.

The basic legal theories accepted during the framing of the Constitution can be summarized by three propositions (Levy focuses on the first and, to some extent, the second). First, in early America there was general agreement that written or spoken criticism of the government or government officials, called "seditious libel," could be criminally punished. Such criticism was thought to undermine the public opinion of and confidence in the government and to endanger public peace. The truth of a criticism aggravated, rather than negated or mitigated, the crime, since a truthful criticism tends all the more to undermine public confidence. Radicals advocated changes (truth should be a defense, and a jury should determine guilt or innocent), but they did not

challenge the basic theory.

Second, speech that differed with majority viewpoints was considered unprotected and undeserving of protection if it could have a possible, though remote, consequence that was thought to be "bad" (called the "bad-tendency" doctrine in law). A corollary useful in criminal prosecutions created a presumption that one who wrote or spoke intended these remote, possible bad consequences.

Third, the streets, sidewalks and parks were considered the property of local governments, which had the power to determine who could speak or what could be said there. Later, a unanimous decision of the Supreme Court (1897) affirmed this theory, drawing on an explicit analogy to the control a homeowner has over his or her living room.

In his major revision of the earlier book, Levy makes clear that there was at various times and places vigorous, sometimes vitriolic, debate during this framing period, and a tradition of dissent developed. It was not unusual for political opponents to liken each other to the devil in newspapers and pamphlets. But there were also many prosecutions and rep-

*The framers of the Constitution "assumed that truth was one-sided and that freedom should be available only to believers."*

IN THESE TIMES MAY 22-28, 1985 19  
ressive actions by legislators, and whatever expression occurred was "dependent on government sufferance."

For example, in 1771, a Philadelphia newspaper charged the speaker of the state assembly with seeking to "destroy liberty" and "enslave and ruin his countrymen." The printer, who could have been tried in court or directly by the assembly was instead ordered to print the assembly's resolution censoring him. Others spent a long time in jail for such comments. Freedom of speech, like our other important rights, had to be exercised illegally before it gained legal protection.

Levy does not address the questions of how and why free-speech law changed, why the fundamental change did not occur until the late '30s, or even why we are so deluded by a clearly false version of our most treasured history. My chapter, "Freedom of Speech," in *The Politics of Law* addresses these issues, including a historical account of the development of the law of free speech that emphasizes the major role played by the labor movement and other progressive movements.

### No social context.

These omissions do not negate the enormous importance of this book, but they are related to its major failing. Levy's approach is almost exclusively focussed on ideas and theories. He effectively takes apart and presents the views of Jeremy Bentham and Jefferson and Paine, using various historical events as benchmarks in a chronology. However, he does not analyze social or political forces or place much importance on conflicts and struggles in society; his chronology of ideas is largely removed from its social context.

This appears to have led Levy to place too much significance on particularly the liberal critics of his earlier book, who were "appalled." They tend to see freedom of speech as a natural right that somehow descended from the clouds rather than as the product of people acting to shape their own history. In their framework, it undercuts the contemporary viability of free-speech law to say that it did not exist at the time of and was not embodied in the Constitution, because that—not struggle or historical development—is the source and basis of freedom of speech.

Levy accepts this framework and is unnecessarily defensive about his conclusions. He assures us that freedom of speech is safe without the common myths about the framers' intent because it is based on "political philosophy's wisest principles" and our "experience." The closing passages of the book even suggest that the vagueness of the wording of the First Amendment is a further source of safety.

Freedom of speech was not a gift of philosophy or the law, natural or otherwise. And it does not have a set or stable definition; the courts are constantly changing its meaning and importance. Lately it has been most beneficial to corporations and the rich, whom the Supreme Court has "freed" by ruling that limits on campaign contributions violate the First Amendment. Freedom of speech today would be a lot safer if we realize that it was won by political struggle and will have to be defended by more struggle.

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## PERFORMANCE ART

# Attacking the inane with irony

By Linda Sanders

YOU KNOW, TO BE REALLY safe you should always carry a bomb on an airplane. Because the chances of there being one bomb on a plane are pretty small. But the chances of two bombs are almost miniscule. So by carrying a bomb on a plane, the odds of your becoming a hostage or of getting blown up are astronomically reduced."

This apocryphal bit of advice is about as close to earnest feelings as you get in Laurie Anderson's funny, original, spectacular and ultimately pretty chilling music theater epic, *United States*. When the complete seven-hour work had its premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music two years ago, it was greeted as the mainstream arrival of "avant-garde" performance art (that deadpan rubric for postmodernism's multimedia contribution to the lively arts) and, also, a damned good show.

But there was no consensus on its pedigree. Clearly Anderson hadn't rouged up another cadaver for Broadway. Yet to call *United States* a contemporary operative

music-drama was just funny, considering that the material was less in the spirit of Richard Wagner than of Alfred E. Newman. And far more interesting than the question of its genre was the question of its tone: the length and scope of *United States* argued for its intent as a Major Statement, but Anderson's ingratiating comic presence and the whimsical nature of the text made it seem fair to describe it as a high-class musical comedy for (then unnamed) yuppies.

Recently Warner Brothers released a recording of the original BAM performances of *United States*—a five-record set that cuts it down to four-and-a-half hours by leaving out some music—and, for me, anyway, hearing it again has kindled a much livelier respect. It was entertaining then and it's entertaining now. It was considered seminal in terms of formal innovation then and more recent music-theater work in a similar vein has borne that out. But where its claims as a "portrait of America" seemed dubious two years ago because it was so dispassionate, I'm inclined to think now that that's the very quality that makes Anderson's picture not just plausible

but prophetic.

With the recording the spectacle element is obviously reduced. You don't get a "show" without the films, slides, drawings, animation, projections and staging of the original. But it doesn't matter too much—the heart of the piece is in the stories and songs. And if you really want more of the visuals than the record liners can offer, there's a very well-done book version from Harper and Row, also called *United States*, which includes texts, lyrics and scores of photographs of the production.

What you don't get with either is Laurie Anderson herself, onstage—and since Performance Art isn't called Performance Art for nothing, that's a drawback. In addition to, having composed, written and otherwise created virtually everything in *United States*, Laurie Anderson is the main—and figuratively speaking, the only—performer. (There are other musicians and a couple of other speaker/singers, but there are no "characters" in the piece.) The show is basically an elaborately illustrated and musicalized monologue, and the recording can't quite convey the disorienting light Anderson casts upon her own text.

the next; play her electric fiddle for a while, then flash a set of 100-watt teeth; follow up a sober remark by donning an extra pair of hands. She's a wry auteur, lovable clown, boss sprite.

## American episodes.

The United States that Laurie Anderson conjures up is essentially a tangled mess of ideas and experience that we absorb in peculiar ways: "There are 10 million stories in the Naked City. But no one can remember which one is theirs." Her triumph is the way she manages to suggest this world within the structural grid of the piece, and not by the kind of prosaic exposition you're reading right now.

Each of the four sections of *United States* has a theme—"Transportation," "Politics," "Money" and "Love"—but the material within each section is so vaguely linked, the titles are almost misleading. The form is purely episodic: one song or story or segment follows another, with no linear narrative development. Most of the stories are anecdotal, but few are actually laugh-out-loud jokes; the best ones contain some elegantly twisted, rueful irony that isn't funny at all. Some texts are deadpan reflections; others are vignettes that Anderson has culled from her real or imaginary travels: a Cree Indian who's paid by documentary filmmakers (heavy irony here) to sing his ancestral songs, which he discovers he doesn't actually remember; a family in Kentucky with two sons inexplicably named Jim and an inexplicably casual attitude toward tragedy (missing brother, local mineshaft).

She flits from one image to another with the unassailable logic of dreams, and with occasional reminders that this joyride may not be all that it seems. ("Do you want right. Anderson has an artful way home now?") She touches on high-tech, dogs, Eskimo travel, cars, Edison and Tecla, being lost, airplanes, dogs, buzzwords, palm-reading, TV, postcards, telephones, being lost, science ("Big Science-Hallelujah-Big Science-Yodelayheehoo"), being lost, dogs and, in tribute to William S. Burroughs, that language is a virus from outer space.

The music glues it all together, besides being wonderful in its own right. Anderson has an artful way of making the line between prose

## CULTURE SHOCK

### A dog's lifestyle

A pet spa has opened, with saunas and Jacuzzis for overstressed animals, in a Beverley Hills suburb.

### Electronic Illiteracy

A survey by the Ministry of Information in Kuwait reveals that a majority of young people prefer to watch TV, rather than read.

### High-Tech Toys

Bored Washington bureaucrats can now lighten a day and a checkbook at an adult toy store stocked with, among other things, a talking scale, a portable tanning system and the ultimate desk blotter, which costs \$2,000.





## ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

and music ambiguous, often simply by bringing up the music while she's talking and turning a story into a song before you know what she's about. Style-wise, her music has about the same relationship to New Wave as that of another theater composer, Kurt Weill, had to the popular music of Germany and America: the sound is basically vernacular (in her case sax, electric keyboards and violin, and rhythm, plus occasional exotica like bagpipes) but there's generally something awry in tone or form that announces its independence from commercial formulas. ("O Superman," the hit tune of *United States*, reached number two on the charts in Great Britain, but not here.)

### Dissociation.

It's Anderson's tone of emotional dissociation that makes *United States* at once so strange and so contemporary. There's no real distinction between the commonplace and the fantastically absurd—she talks about both with the same deadpan neutrality, which has the effect of making the most familiar situation seem alien and the most banal sentiment demented. She

doesn't explain much, explicitly or implicitly. Her stories take the form of parables, fables, homilies, but there're neither resonant nor instructive—they just drop, often as not leaving you with a question mark in a thought bubble over your head. She uses titles like "Politics" and "Money," but except for the shrewdness of regarding science as a subcategory of politics, there's not much insight here, just a few politically-correct reflections threaded through an otherwise fabulist tapestry. And while her onstage persona may sometimes make you think that she's just a kid showing you her bug collection, she generally turns out to be Groucho Marx with a chart and a pointer.

In a word, it's camp. Not camp in the old sense of a specific form of satiric or parodic humor, but in its new status as a pervasive mode of American experience and expression. Whereas camp used to be associated mainly with pockets of the culturally disenfranchised—gays, alienated intellectuals, anyone who cultivated an attachment to the mainstream culture they couldn't seriously embrace or totally ignore—it's now becoming

## Laurie Anderson uses the tokens of mass culture for a voyage in quest of American identity.

the tribal tongue of a dominant segment of the mainstream culture itself, the baby boomers and their immediate progeny, particularly of the upwardly mobile variety. This camp language is a system of cues that conveys an ironic appreciation of the inane, usually the tokens of mass culture: TV, commercials, celebrity worship, political jargon; all the various assaults on credulousness and dignity that contribute so much to the daily texture of American life.

### No cheap shots.

Since camp often entails cultivating a twisted enjoyment of what you despise, it's very tricky, psyche-wise. Laurie Anderson has little in common with camp's uglier manifestations, currently best represented by the very popular David Letterman. Arbiter of hip for his yuppie and proto-yuppie

minions, Letterman is not only tediously, pathologically incapable of uttering a sentence in earnest (unless he is fawning over a celebrity he thinks is hipper than he is, like Eddie Murphy), but someone who focuses much of his contempt upon the trivial, the innocuous and the downright pathetic. (Not to mention two favorite and perhaps thematically intertwined sources of hilarity, frightened dogs who do tricks and people on the streets who don't speak English so good.)

Dark as her humor can be, Anderson doesn't indulge in cheap shots. Like Letterman, she plays the person who can't turn off the camp, who can only express things disingenuously, who looks at things through a veil of irony; but that's where the resemblance ends. Letterman and company simply enjoy and promote a sense of social superiority through the

classic means of socially mandated contempt, but Anderson's comic irony represents something else altogether. It's an unedited private response to a culture that's all done with mirrors; a self-protective camouflage among fellow strangers whose contributions to your understanding of the world lead you inevitably to the conclusion that they must be, somehow, kidding.

*United States* is an '80s contribution to personal quest literature, one that aptly turns the search for identity and meaning into a parody of the search for identity and meaning. As such it dovetails nicely with its ostensible subject, contemporary America—where American values have real meaning now that they've been turned into parodies of American values, and where camp has reached its conceptually perfect form in the fact of a Ronald Reagan presidency.

"Count me out," says Ms. A. "You gotta count me out." ■ *Linda Sanders is a New York music critic whose articles and reviews have appeared in Saturday Review, The Nation, the Village Voice and other publications.*

## DOCUMENTARY

## Streetwise: Tears are not enough

By Kathleen Hulser

A SCRAWNY KID SKATES down the corridor of an abandoned hotel. It's his home. A sulky young pimp dyes his hair over a motel sink. He's mad because his "whore," who looks at most 13, won't help him. A doctor warns a bitty girl with stringy bangs that she might have gonorrhea, and might be pregnant. The girl can't guess when her next period is because she's only menstruated once before.

These kids populate *Streetwise*, a *cinéma vérité* look at runaways hanging out on Seattle's Pike Street. They're wholesome kids who turn "dates," roll queers and scavenge dinner from dumpsters. Documentary photographer Mary Ellen Mark, magazine writer Cheryl McCall and cinematographer Martin Bell joined forces to film in August 1983, after McCall and Mark had published a *Life* magazine article on the same subject. This alert and observant film, which has both won an Oscar nomination and become a box-office success, contrasts the restless motion of the troubled teens with a grim subtext of family trauma.

It's a sign of the time that family, not society, is the focus. Avoiding sociological footnotes, the filmmakers mine the observational strengths of *cinéma vérité*, inspired by the style of Allen King and Fred Wiseman. But *vérité* works best on what is, not on why and how, and this film leaves us wondering what in American families and society provoke 13-year-olds to leave home for the streets.

Shot in primaries and pastels as sunny as a David Hockney painting, *Streetwise* plays up the skinny exuberance of the kids in a manner that outweighs their often unlovely current activities and depressing family circumstances. A practiced wildlife photographer, Bell tracks movement superbly. The fidgety kids ricochet from one street corner to the next, and the film's fragmented editing captures this mobile quality of children edging into adolescence—the open faces, wobbly knees and coltish darting around.

This restlessness stems from more than hormonal surges. As the past peeks through their conversations and confessions, we glimpse a world straight from the Brothers Grimm, full of wicked stepmothers, big bad wolves, unscrupulous strangers. Even the theme music—a gravelly voiced derelict croaking "The Teddy Bears' Picnic"—is a dirge, not a lullaby.

These are kids with bitter childhoods, and looking over their shoulders we feel the hot wind of adolescent outrage. A girl hangs up on her mother, saying, "I hope you have fun with your stupid-ass new husband." Another sunny spirit blithely observes that "I never miss my mom and dad; they're just part of my past." Meanwhile, he lives with a guy 20 years his senior "for protection."

The mothers and fathers behind these kids bear the marks of cycles of rejection, poverty and alcoholism, and the film glumly implies that the circle is unbroken. Tiny carries her mother's suitcase to the car when waitress Mom



(who has been beaten by her husband) goes to a drunk tank to dry out. Tiny then falls in love with Rat, who doesn't know whether he really likes her. Tiny's predictable plunge into unrequited love and dependence comes out when she's nabbed for prostitution. Rat visits but claims he must leave town before she's freed on Monday. Likewise, Shelly echoes family pathology with her "Playboy." Playboy likes girls because they like him. Shelly turns tricks for him, she likes him so well. The cycle of ties to abusive men is revealed when she recalls her father sexually molesting her during childhood.

Rough on girls, papa doesn't do much better with sons. Leroy, prison father of Dewayne, reduces his son to tears when he scolds him through the bullet-proof glass in the visiting room. Mostly seen forlornly sparechanging, the miserable Dewayne commits suicide by the film's finale.

As social commentary, the film seems a throwback to an earlier period when tears for poor little white kids and their sad families were as far as documentary dared to go in criticizing American society. Contrast *Streetwise*'s lost children with the dehumanized cool cats (of the same age!) in hip-hop films. Is our sympathy for the former a measure of the difference in how society responds to black ghetto youth and white youth? One group creates a dance-music fad with overtones of social rebellion and doesn't make us worry about the culture of deprivation that spawned it; the other, marked by similar forces, appears as sacrificial lambs, languishing for white knights. This tug at the heartstrings may marshal momentary concern, but *Streetwise* is unwise when it lets matters end with a funeral and a good cry.

■ *Kathleen Hulser is a New York-based arts critic and video producer.*



# PLO

Continued from page 11

National Council, understands that without the Democratic Alliance, such a council would be weak and recognized by only a few Arab states.

In the months prior to the PNC, Habash did appear to uncharacteristically yield to Syrian influence when his Popular Front echoed Assad's insistence that there be no PNC in Algiers, the projected site, until all factions had reached an overall agreement. When the National Alliance refused to drop its precondition that Arafat be replaced as PLO chairman and leader of Fateh prior to a PNC, Fateh felt forced to issue its call for an Amman Council. The Democratic Front—having previously told the Fateh Central Committee that they were prepared to join any National Council held anywhere except in Amman, "regardless of the short-term consequences," and disturbed by the unilateral nature of the call—ended up joining the boycott.

## National Alliance.

The National Alliance has adopted several stalling tactics in order to await the outcome of the current Hussein (Egyptian President Hosni) Mubarak-Arafat diplomatic initiative and the possibility of circumstances more propitious to their anti-Arafat strategy. These tactics include their insistence that the Amman PNC is totally invalid, a stance shared with the Popular Front.

The problem there, as Democratic Front spokesman Jamil Hilal told *In These Times*, is that, of the old PLO executive committee or cabinet, only four are left who either haven't taken part in the new executive committee or haven't resigned. And the National Alliance's demand that Arafat be ousted prior to their taking part in any of the PLO's institutions runs counter to the conviction of all factions of the Democratic Alliance. Habash's Popular Front and Hawatmeh's Democratic Front were

equally vocal in their condemnation of the pro-Syrian dissidents' armed rebellion against Arafat loyalists in Lebanon, and they oppose Arafat's removal by coup. They strongly maintain that the PLO's democratic institutions—painstakingly built for the Palestinians over the last 20 years and among the movement's crowning achievements—are the valid forum for resolving internal differences.

Since the National Alliance wants dialog on their conditions, and the Democratic Front has found such preconditions unacceptable, the level of communication between the two has been very low. Habash's group remains the Democratic Alliance's bridge to the National Alliance, and Syrian pressure is being directed at keeping that bridge open. At the same time it is the view of observers here that pressure on the Democratic Front emanates principally from Assad's fear that if Hawatmeh and Arafat reconcile their major differences, the rest of the Democratic Alliance would be more likely to join them or follow soon after.

But given Syria's strategic and political importance in Palestinian politics, and remembering that most of the Damascus-based factions' administrative and military resources are in Syrian-controlled territory, a high price would be paid for taking a position. Not all of the Democratic Alliance factions might be willing to pay that price. Since last summer, for example, Assad has made it clear that anyone linking up with Arafat is no longer welcome in Syria.

For the rift between Fateh and the Democratic Alliance to be closed, two of the latter's main concerns must be satisfied:

- First, Arafat's tendency toward individual diplomacy, brought into prominence by his unauthorized visit to Cairo in late 1983, must give way to collective leadership. From the earliest days of Fateh, Arafat's actions have often been self-referential. But the Aden-Algiers agreement, concluded last July between the Democratic Alliance factions and the Fateh central committee, seemed to rein his excesses into manageable proportion. Among other

things, that accord provided for collective leadership (i.e., rule by majority decision) of the executive committee and gave the PLO central council the power to suspend any member of the executive committee who departed from PNC resolutions.

During the recent Fateh-dominated PNC, however, the Aden-Algiers agreement was not endorsed, nor was the final communiqué in harmony with its spirit or text, and that increased the Democratic Alliance's suspicions regarding Arafat's reliability. The accord would have to be implemented for any broader-based Council to be a possibility.

The underlying fear concerning Arafat's unilateral diplomatic moves is that he will let himself get trapped, that he will concede more and more in order to meet American and Israeli preconditions and in the process depart from the minimal PLO demands of an independent Palestinian state and the PLO as the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative, as defined in the 1974 Rabat resolution. King Hussein's motives come under particular scrutiny in this context.

Many PLO leftists are not convinced that Hussein has unequivocally accepted the Rabat resolution. They strongly suspect that his ultimate objective is to displace the PLO in that role. As a consequence, they view the joint Jordanian-PLO initiative suggested by Hussein at the PNC and carried forth in the February 11 agreement, as a calculated step in that direction.

- Second, for unity to be possible there must be a reinstitution of the principle of consensus, which was replaced by majority rule at the Amman PNC largely because it had come to symbolize political paralysis to the numerically dominant pro-Fateh membership.

"Consensus is neither democratic nor helpful in forwarding our cause," Mohammad Milhem said in Amman, not long after assuming his seat as an independent on the new executive committee. "To have under the consensus everybody interpreting the resolutions of the PNC his own way—there is the paralysis."

The Democratic Alliance, in contrast, views the PLO more as an alliance than as simply a representative institution like the American Congress. "A numerical majority is not necessarily the criteria," said Democratic Front spokesman Hilal.

"All the classes of Palestinians—from the national bourgeoisie to the various sectors of the petit bourgeoisie to the workers and to the peasants, etc.—have an interest in the independence of a state of their own," he argued. "They all have been affected in various ways and to various degrees by the Israeli occupation. And the only way to keep all these classes and all these strata united is through a PLO that represents all these strata and all these classes."

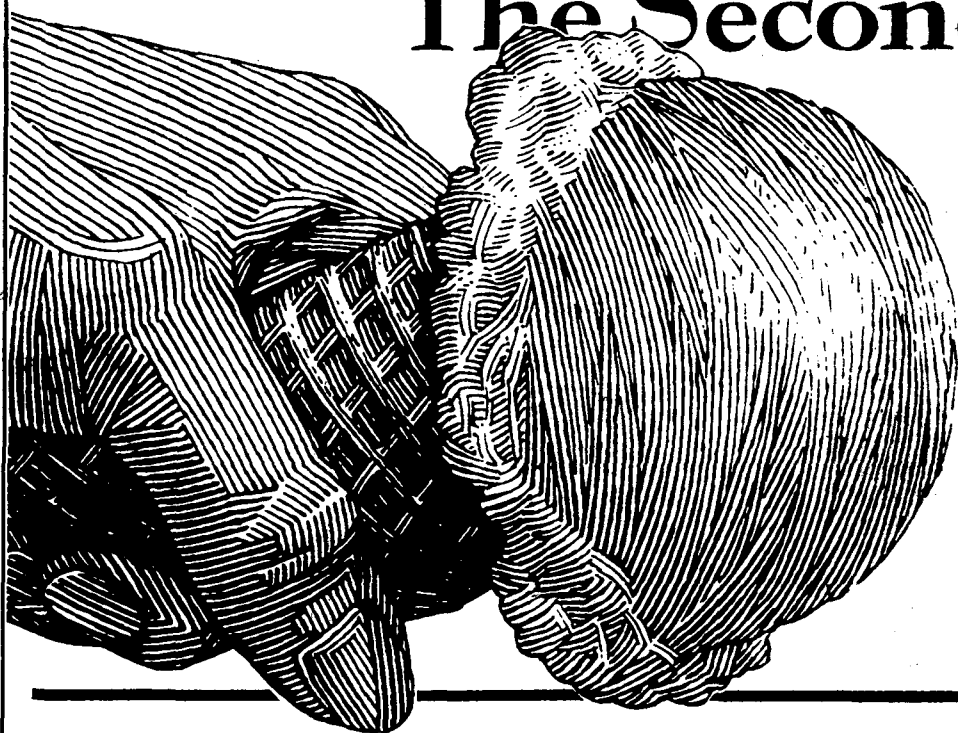
From the Democratic Alliance's viewpoint, both Fateh and the National Alliance exhibit a tendency to shape a PLO of one political or ideological coloring. And in each case, it is at the expense of the working classes or the poorer sectors of Palestinian society that, their argument goes, have provided the internal strength necessary to resist making concessions of a principle nature.

To some degree the Democratic Alliance is still waiting for the dust to settle. The intra-Palestinian fighting in Lebanon, Arafat's trip to Cairo, the Amman PNC and the Arafat-Hussein agreement of February 11 have cumulatively had the effect of overshadowing the "historic achievement" of the Aden-Algiers accord.

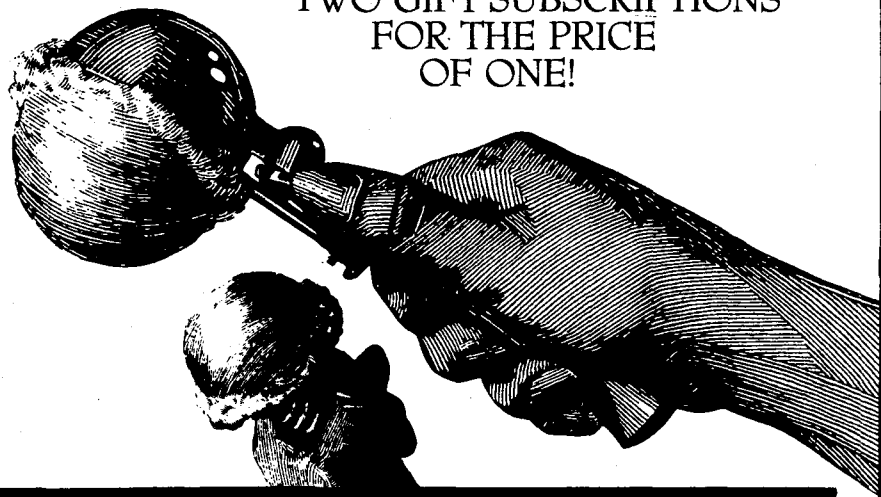
But behind it all, the priority within the Democratic Alliance remains solving the PLO question if only because prolonged disunity between the major factions would ultimately erode the PLO's overall status and political role. It is increasingly clear to all concerned parties that no negotiated settlement of any lasting value is possible without at least a substantial reconciliation between the Democratic Alliance and Fateh.

Roger Gaess writes for the *Journal of Palestine Studies* and *American-Arab Affairs*.

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# Parenting

Continued from page 24

ended his long run in 1964, and Donna Reed had to resort to "adoption" to sustain a family situation in 1963. Even *Leave It to Beaver* went off in 1963 (incidentally, never once having cracked the top 25 in its six seasons).

In Cosby's show, and in *Family Ties*, which follows it in the schedule (and which only began to draw significant ratings with Cosby's lead-in), for the first time in more than 20 years, network TV has told its audience that it's O.K. to get married and have children. And the audience has accepted it, and made it popular.

## Too perfect?

Of course, there is lots of room for debate about the reality of family life as illustrated by NBC's Thursday schedule. Cosby sometimes seems a bit old for his family, since one kid is only six years old. And the family is practically perfect, with lots of money and visible love and people who never yell at each other—an ideal nuclear family, no matter what its color. That is obviously part of the show's attraction for a significant part of the audience, those nostalgic for a more "wholesome" imaginary past.

But being ideal is never enough in any entertainment medium, especially comedy. The late-'50s family sit-coms were idealizations, with the result that they eliminated all the tensions and complexities of family life, with every problem solved in 26 minutes and no problems of real life outside the family allowed to intrude. As a result, they got boring and were cancelled and replaced by other kinds of sit-coms.

But as the sit-coms tried to include more recognition of "reality," strange things happened. "Family units" in all of the three basic patterns above ceased being ideal and came in regular contact with the problems facing society. In doing so, the families that remained became beleaguered fragments, constantly under attack from "social problems" outside and continually threatened with destruction from within, a group of people that defined themselves as "Us Against the World" rather than as "Us Within the World."

And, in the ostensible search for reality, an enormous amount of the reality of family life disappeared completely, along with the biological family.

When was the last time you saw anyone in a sit-com go to church? get visited at home by a minister? attend a Boy Scout or Girl Scout meeting? go to Little League games or music or dance recitals of their kids? go to the library? take the entire family on a car trip? For that matter, when was the last time you saw anyone in any series in a car, yet not involved in a car chase or a stakeout? Sit-coms instead have become the home of the insult, the sleazy double entendre and the "broken home," dealing weekly with rape, abortion, runaways, dope addiction or some other social crisis.

For more than a generation, TV hasn't depicted the ordinary acts of family life in the one form of entertainment it produces aimed at a "family audience." That is the real significance of *The Cosby Show* and,

IN THESE TIMES MAY 22-28, 1985 23 to a certain extent, of *Family Ties*.

At the moment, *The Cosby Show* is merely a novelty that provides some desperately needed balance to the sit-coms of the last 20 years. If it slides into the sanitized world of *Father Knows Best*, if it becomes merely the first of an onslaught of "clean," "perfect" families, then we could be in for a decade of sit-coms that no more genuinely depict family life than any of the other TV series we've seen in the last 30 years.

But the show is also in position to be a pivotal series and, like *All in the Family*, *Dallas* or *The Tonight Show*, to alter television programming and, not coincidentally, to influence the next generation's interpretation of daily life.

David Grote is the author of *The End of Comedy*.

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#### May 31

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# PRIME TIME PARENTING

By David Grote



NBC

*The Cosby Show* is the first sit-com in decades to feature a nuclear family.

AT FIRST GLANCE, THERE doesn't seem to be anything unusual about *The Cosby Show*, other than its popularity, which seems to have caught everyone by surprise. It's just a sit-com, not as polished as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, not as socially concerned as *M\*A\*S\*H* or *All in the Family*, not as wildly funny as the early days of *Mork & Mindy*. And yet, it is one of the most unusual programs to appear on network television in almost 20 years.

It may also become the most important program to premier on network TV since *All in the Family*, not merely because of its positive image of blacks. *Cosby's* show does feature a black family, but that's hardly novel; we have had black families in sit-coms on a pretty regular basis since *Good Times*, and *The Jeffersons* is still on after 10 successful seasons. And at times it has seemed, as in such shows as *Webster* or *Diff'rent Strokes*, that the only children to be allowed on TV were black (albeit in white families).

The novelty of *The Cosby Show* is simply that it is a very popular show about a nuclear black family.

Stated so baldly, the idea seems absurd; sit-coms and families seem inseparable. But, in fact, very few popular sit-coms have ever dealt with common family life.

For almost 25 years, TV sit-coms have followed three basic patterns. Pattern one is the single-parent family, endless variations on *My Three Sons*. For the men, this includes such shows as *Family Affair*, *The Andy Griffith Show* and, peripherally, *Welcome Back, Kotter*. Eventually, we found women in the household-head position, but still single, as in *The Doris Day Show*, *Julia*, *One Day at a Time* and, most recently, *Kate & Allie*.

Pattern two is the family with grown-up children: *The Beverly Hillbillies* is the progenitor (with only a single parent), but the genre didn't really take off until *All in the*

*Family*. Almost all of Norman Lear's successful shows and their imitators followed this pattern. These featured children who were "grown up," either physically (seniors in high school or older) or socially (precocious "street-wise" kids who told their parents the facts of life in the modern world). On TV, any kids below the age of 14 were adopted, partially orphaned or living in broken homes. And all the children knew more about "life" than their parents.

Pattern three is the artificial family. This takes the form of either the family friends, like *Three's Company*, *Mork*, *Mindy* or *Laverne & Shirley*, or the family of folks at work, appearing as early as *Our Miss Brooks* and *Private Secretary*, but becoming dominant sit-com format in the '70s and early '80s—*M\*A\*S\*H*, *The Bob Newhart Show*, *Newhart*, *Alice*, *Barney Miller*, *Taxi*, *Cheers*.

All three patterns avoid the type of family most children live in for at least part of their childhoods—parents with their biological children—as if it were a plague.

Married couples themselves have almost been an endangered species on TV. Only three moderately successful sit-coms in the last decade featured a couple living in the same house with their own children—*Happy Days*, *Too Close for Comfort* and *Good Times*. *Too Close for Comfort* featured grown-up daughters the father didn't want to let go of, and *Good Times* quickly lost one (and for a time, both) of the parents. If you watched sit-coms, you could seriously believe that no one had gotten married and had children since the Beatles recorded *Sergeant Pepper*.

If you want a sit-com featuring a child with both parents and which ranked in the top 25 series, you have to go back to 1966, the last year of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. The last genuinely popular year of *Father Knows Best* was 1960, the same year that Ricky went to college and Ozzie and Harriet ceased to be active parents, Danny Thomas

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